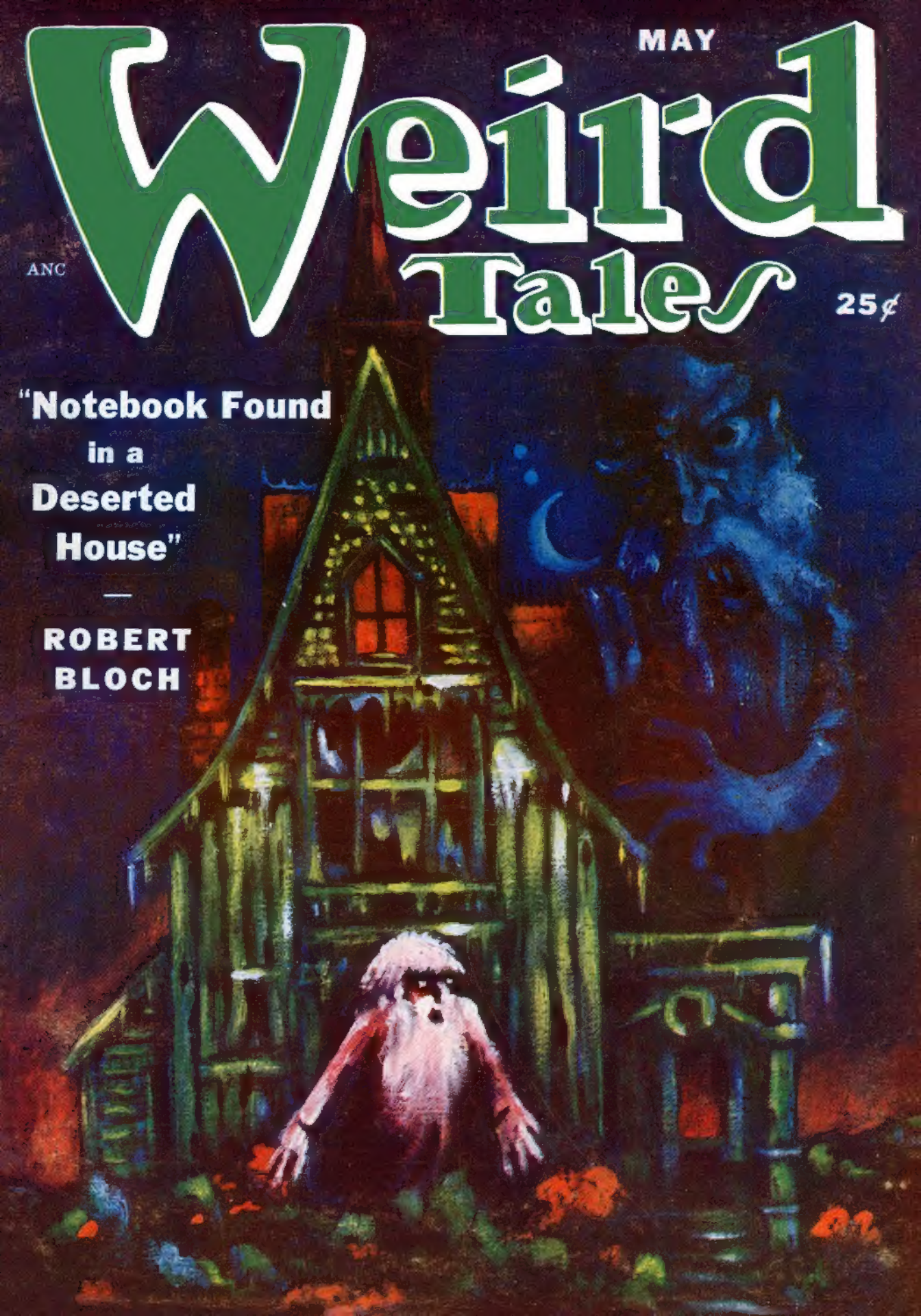
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RAZOR PULLS, EH? TRY THIS THIN GILLETTE BLADE
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YES, THEY'RE PLENTY KEEN AND LONG-LASTING
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NOVELETTES

NOTEBOOK FOUND IN A DESERTED HOUSE . . . . . Robert Bloch 14
The boy knew all sorts of stories about witches and devils and bat men that suck your blood, and haunts . . . so he was sure things were moving in the wood.

THE KEEPER OF THE KEY . . . . . August Derleth 52
Its altars suggestively low—as if made for creatures that crawled rather than went upright.

SHORT STORIES

THE LAST GRAVE OF LILL WARRAN . . . . . Manly Wade Wellman 28
For Lill—a hunter would leave his gun, a drinker would leave his bottle of stumphole whiskey, a farmer would leave his plough standing in the field.

THE ISLE OF THE SLEEPER . . . . . Edmond Hamilton 42
If we ourselves are images in the dreams of some fantastic one who slumbers on a mystic island, what would happen if the Sleeper awoke?

THE CUCKOO CLOCK . . . . . David Eynon 75
The Baron thought fooling with clocks a dull business. But is death a dull business?

THESE DOTH THE LORD HATE . . . . . Gans T. Field 80
She said, "Go away a little, and I will quickly make it rain on whatever part of the garden you wish.

THE BRADLEY VAMPIRE . . . . . Roger M. Thomas 84
Fifty years later to the day Great Grandfather's unopened box was turned over to me. . . .

VERSE

SWAN MAIDEN . . . . . Leah Bodine Drake 51

STAR OF JOY . . . . . Robert Forrest 79

THE EYRIE 6

THE WEIRD TALES CLUB 12

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Published bi-monthly by WEIRD TALES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. *Subscription rates:* One year in the United States and possessions, $1.50. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession.

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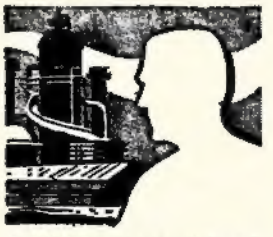

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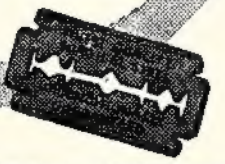

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The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

Feature of the March WEIRD TALES *is the lack of unevenness that seems to have dogged the footsteps of recent issues. This one has not only some solid stories; they're all strong. This combined with another effective cover by Wayne makes the issue the most consistently interesting you've turned out in a year.*

Top story of the issue was your cover story selection: Wakefield's "A Black Solitude." There's a writer who wrenches your attention right off the bat and then refuses to let it lag for a moment during the subsequent unfolding of the action. Apparently the author decided that he's going to equal the great M. R. James because his recent stories have scored resounding successes in each case.

Benjamin Ferriss is an unfamiliar author to me, but if his "The Invaders" is typical of his work, pray secure additional yarns from him. His narration abilities are more than competent.

Another newcomer, Don Peterson, captures third spot in some rugged competition by virtue of his suspenseful "The White Feather Hex." A bit anti-climactic, I thought, but the last couple of paragraphs gave it the required strong finish.

Oldtimers Frank Belknap Long and Greye La Spina present incontrovertible evidence that not only are they competent writers after all these years but that they still enjoy their tasks. Both "The Mississippi Saucer" and "Old Mr. Wiley" possess smooth writing, good characterization—plus an engaging quality one usually associates with the work of newcomers.

Piper's "Dearest" helped spice the issue by way of contrast; and only a formula ending to "Each Man Kills" kept the otherwise freshly-presented material from scoring a loud bull's-eye.

Bok's "Weirditties of Science" will be retained as a regular feature, we hope.

Interior art work: as usual, Eberle's illustration and layout, this time for Drake's verse is the best inside. Dolgov retains his top-rung classification with the double-page spread for the Wakefield heading. Arfstrom presents a mighty effective contribution for Long's story. Don Peterson scores a success also as an illustrator. Coye I still enjoy; and Napoli hit a consistent pace this issue, with slight preference going to the Ferriss headpiece.

Another thing about the March issue: the stories seemed more truly "weird" than has the totality of any issue in a long while, thus leaving the s-f stories to others.

Sincerely,
Wm. N. Austin,
Seattle, Washington.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I have been an occasional reader of your magazine and have liked it because of its strange, bizarre, unique, and most of the time, very well written stories. However, I did not like the last issue. Perhaps "not

(*Continued on page* 8)

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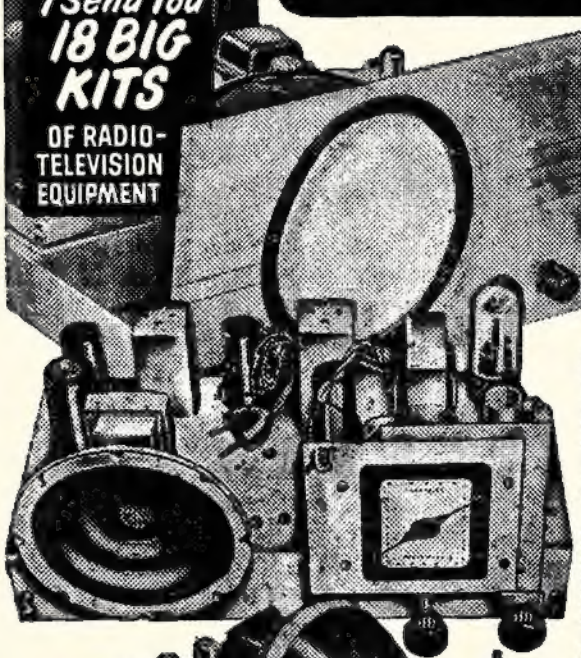

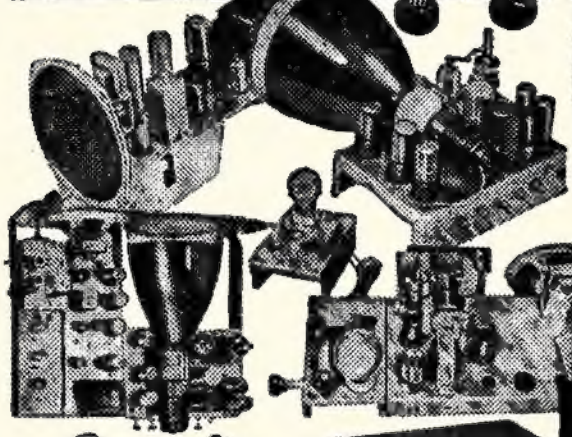

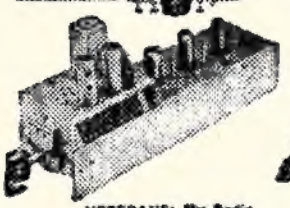

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(*Continued from page 6*)

like" is too strong a phrase; most likely "I thought the issue was indifferent" is a better phrase. Tepid acceptance of stories is still no reason for reading them, and I know how easy it was to be critical. Tearing apart a story, finding apter words than the author employed etc. have always been easy tasks. Finding ideas and working them into plots are formidable ones, especially in the weird story field where the strange, the unusual must always be present and conventional plots, no matter how reworked, cannot be used. However, I still feel that effort could have improved the various plots and more effort could have made the writing active and sparkling.

Many of the writers have written much better stories and some of them have written some good stories indeed. Apologies. Apologies. But I had to approach ten magazine sellers before I could obtain the magazine.

The "piece de resistance" of a recent issue "The Unwanted" by Elizabeth Counselman almost compensates for the issue's disappointments. Now, it is not my type of the story irresistible. I like children, but to me they've never been compelling story material and I've not been charmed by mountain people. But the census taker, the mountaineer, his wife, and the "children" appeared so real, so natural are the emotions, and so strong the sympathy engendered that it will be a story to be remembered. I believe that anything so vivid and compelling makes a very good story indeed. I've read few better ones.

Robert L. Drazen,
Brooklyn, New York.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

In a recent issue of WT one of your readers, Gordon L. Gillmore, of Seattle, Wash., complains in his letter that some of the better writers of weird tales seem to have "run temporarily arid."

In the first sentence of his letter he mentions something about hesitating before criticizing another's work. He may well hesitate. Don't all writers run dry, as it were, every now and then? Who'll agree with me that it's easy enough to say, "Let us have this or that in fantastic and supernatural story telling—" but that it is quite another thing to produce these stories? Perhaps I'm in a beefing mood this morning (having spent half the night enjoying WT) because being a bit of a writer myself, I'm finding it hard to locate the proper angle for my particular piece of the month.

At any rate, I've read WT for the past twenty years and am still an addict. In my estimation, the majority of stories in each issue are good. I am a handwriting analyst and have some of Lovecraft's and Clark Ashton Smith's handwriting . . . most interesting.

Naiia Andreyeff.
New York, N. Y.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

The March, '51 issue of WEIRD TALES *had some very fine stories, especially "Old Mr. Wiley" and "Each Man Kills."*

The illustrations of "Mississippi Saucer" and "A Black Solitude" were good but I miss Lee Brown Coye. I didn't care for the cover; it wasn't ghoulish enough. I would like to see some illustrations by Lee Brown Coye, Dolgov, and Humiston.

Also it would be nice if WEIRD TALES *was published every month instead of bi-monthly.*

Although I am making a goodly amount of complaints, I think your magazine is the Finest Horror Magazine I have ever seen. It is and has been my favorite ever since I first saw it on the newsstand.

Jacquelynne Miller,
Los Angeles, California.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I feel that a few words of appreciation would not be amiss for the fine novelette in a recent issue, "Shallaja" by Arthur J. Burks, which I read with much interest and intensity.

(*Continued on page 10*)

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(*Continued from page 8*)

For the past twenty-five years I have been a keen student of occultism and have proved quite convincingly, from my own experience, how true are the statements outlined in this novelette. May we have more of the same description?

I have been a reader of WEIRD TALES *since 1920, in U. S. A., when I could obtain copies of your magazine. Unfortunately, now, I usually have to wait until I travel to Northern Ireland (Belfast) to procure them, as, no doubt you are aware that many American magazines and other journals are banned in Eire by the censor. However, perhaps in time this difficulty will be overcome. Here's hoping and "more power to ye!"*

Sincerely yours,
Mrs. Alice Law,
Dublin, Ireland.

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I have been reading WEIRD TALES *for I don't know how many years. Sometimes I can find* WEIRD TALES *and sometimes I can't. But since I made a deal with the lady at the newsstand she keeps my copy especially for me. And I consider myself lucky.*

I've never written a fan letter before but I shall speak as though to a friend. I really do enjoy WEIRD TALES. *I'll admit that sometimes I hesitate when I hear the pattering footstep noises the dry autumn leaves make as the wind hurries them along. You have had some excellent stories about the wind and its strange behavior. May we have more? Also, is it permissible to write others who enjoy* WEIRD TALES?

Mary K. Tieman,
Christopher, Illinois.

BOOKS RECEIVED

ARKHAM HOUSE

A Hornbook for Witches by Leah Bodine Drake • A very fine collection of poems of fantasy with the right eerie touch of horror. Miss Drake appears frequently in WEIRD TALES and we consider her one of the top poets in her field. This collection contains some of her best. We also enjoyed the jacket flap of the book which gives Miss Drake's ancestral background as English, Irish, Welsh and French, the family tree including Sir Francis Drake, Davy Crockett and Jean Bodin. Wonder if the Witches from "Macbeth" were grafted on anywhere?

DOUBLEDAY SCIENCE FICTION

The Stars Like Dust by Isaac Asimov • A college student of the future recognizes the murmuring of his bedroom as "Earth's death rattle." It was the sound that had been invented one thousand years before. Overnight he changed from a casual student, whose home was on another planet, into a fugitive fleeing from an unknown assassin. His flight brings him up against the war lords of Tyrann and into the inky blackness of the Horsehead Nebula.

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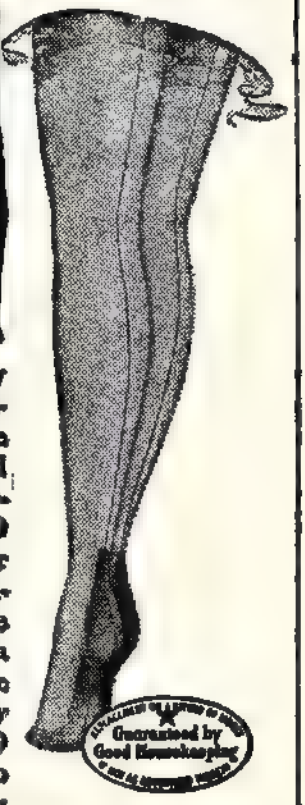

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Notebook Found in a Deserted House

. . . like something was out there in the quiet dark, some place, waiting to grab me.

By Robert Bloch

FIRST off, I want to write that I never did anything wrong. Not to nobody. They got no call to shut me up here, whoever they are. They got no reason to do what I'm afraid they're going to do, either.

I think they're coming pretty soon, because they've been gone outside a long time. Digging, I guess, in that old well. Looking for a gate, I heard. Not a regular gate, of course, but something else.

Got a notion what they mean, and I'm scared.

I'd look out the windows but of course they are boarded up so I can't see.

But I turned on the lamp, and I found this here notebook so I want to put it all down. Then if I get a chance maybe I can send it to somebody who can help me. Or maybe somebody will find it. Anyway, it's better to write it out as best I can instead of just sitting here and waiting. Waiting for *them* to come and get me.

I better start by telling my name, which is Willie Osborne, and that I am 12 years old last July. I don't know where I was born.

First thing I can remember is living out Roodsford way, out in what folks call the back Lill country. It's real lonesome out there, with deep woods all around and lots of mountains and hills that nobody ever climbs.

Grandma use to tell me about it when I was just a little shaver. That's who I lived with, just Grandma on account of my real folks being dead. Grandma was the one who taught me how to read and write. I never been to a regular school.

Grandma knew all kinds of things about the hills and the woods and she told me some mighty queer stories. That's what I thought they was, anyway, when I was little and living all alone with her. Just stories, like the ones in books.

Like stories about *them ones* hiding in the swamps, that was here before the settlers and the Indians both and how there was circles in the swamps and big stones called alters where *them ones* use to make sacrefices to what they worshiped.

Grandma got some of the stories from her Grandma she said—about how *them ones* hid in the woods and swamps because they couldn't stand sunshine, and how the Indians kept out of their way. She said sometimes the Indians would leave some of their young people tied to trees in the forest as a sacrefice, so as to keep *them* contented and peacefull.

Indians knew all about *them* and they tried to keep white folks from noticing too much or settling too close to the hills. *Them ones* didn't cause much trouble, but they might if they was crowded. So the Indians

Heading by Matt Fox

give excuses for not settling, saying there weren't enough hunting and no trails and it was too far off from the coast.

Grandma told me that was why not many places was settled even today. Nothing but a few farmhouses here and there. She told me *them ones* was still alive and sometimes on certain nights in the Spring and Fall you could see lights and hear noises far off on the tops of the hills.

Grandma said I had an Aunt Lucy and a Uncle Fred who lived out there right smack in the middle of the hills. Said my Pa used to visit them before he got married and once he heard *them* beating on a tree drum one night along about Halloween time. That was before he met Ma and they got married and she died when I come and he went away.

I HEARD all kinds of stories. About witches and devils and bat men that sucked your blood and haunts. About Salem and Arkham becauses I never been to a city and I wanted to hear tell how they were. About a place called Innsmouth with old rotten houses where people hid awful things away in the cellars and the attics. She told me bout the way graves was dug deep under Arkham. Made it sound like the whole country was full of haunts.

She use to scare me, telling about how some of these things looked and all but she never would tell me how *them ones* looked no matter how much I asked. Said she didn't want me to have any truck with such things—bad enough she and her kin knew as much as they did—allmost too much for decent God fearing people. It was lucky for me I didn't have to bother with such ideas, like my own ansestor on my father's side, Mehitabel Osborne, who got hanged for a witch back in the Salem days.

So they was just stories to me until last year when Grandma died and Judge Crubbinthorp put me on the train and I went out to live with Aunt Lucy and Uncle Fred in the very same hills that Grandma use to tell about so often.

You can bet I was pretty excited, and the conductor let me ride with him all the way and told me about the towns and everything.

Uncle Fred met me at the station. He was a tall thin man with a long beard. We drove off in a buggy from the little deepo —no houses around there or nothing—right into the woods.

Funny thing about those woods. They was so still and quiet. Gave me the creeps they was so dark and lonesome. Seemed like nobody had ever shouted or laughed or even smiled in them. Could'nt imagine anyone saying anything there excep in whispers.

Trees and all was so old, too. No animals around or birds. Path kind of overgrown like nobody used it much ever. Uncle Fred drove along right fast, he didn't hardly talk to me at all but just made that old horse hump it.

Pretty soon we struck into some hills, they was awfully high ones. They was woods on them, too, and sometimes a brook come running down, but I didn't see no houses and it was always dark like at twilight, wherever you looked.

Lastly we got to the farmhouse—a little place, old frame house and barn in a clear space with trees all around kind of gloomy-like. Aunt Lucy come out to meet us, she was a nice sort of little middle-aged lady who hugged me and took my stuff in back.

But all this don't hold with what I'm supposed to write down here. It don't matter that all this last year I was living in the house here with them, eating off the stuff Uncle Fred farmed without ever going into town. No other farms around here for almost four mile and no school—so evenings Aunt Lucy would help me with my reading. I never played much.

At first I was scared of going into the woods on account of what Grandma had told me. Besides, I could tell as Aunt Lucy and Uncle Fred was scared of something from the way they locked the doors at night and never went into the woods after dark, even in summer.

But after a while, I got used to the idea of living in the woods and they didn't seem so scarey. I did chores for Uncle Fred, of course, but sometimes in afternoons when he was busy I'd go off by myself. Particular by the time it was fall.

And that's how I heard one of the things.

It was early October, I was in the glen right by the big boulder. Then the noise started. I got behind that rock fast.

You see, like I say, there isn't any animals in the woods. Nor people. Excep perhaps old Cap Pritchett the mailman who only comes through on Thursday afternoons.

So when I heard a sound that wasn't Uncle Fred or Aunt Lucy calling to me, I knew I better hide.

About that sound. It was far-away at first, kind of a dropping noise. Sounded like the blood falling in little spurts on the bottom of the bucket when Uncle Fred hung up a butchered hog.

I looked around but I couldn't make out nothing, and I couldn't figure out the direction the noise was from either. The noise sort of stopped for a minute and they was only twilight and trees, still as death. Then the nose started again, nearer and louder.

Sounded like a lot of people running or walking all at once, moving this way. Twigs busting under feet and scrabbling in the bushes all mixed up in the noise. I scrunched down behind that boulder and kep real quiet.

I can tell that whatever makes the noise, it's real close now, right in the glen. I want to look up but dassn't because the sound is so loud and *mean*. And also there is an awful smell like something that was dead and buried being uncovered again in the sun.

All at once the noise stops again and I can tell that whatever makes it is real close by. For a minute the woods are creepy-still. Then comes the sound.

It's a voice and it's not a voice. That is, it doesn't *sound* like a voice but more like a buzzing or croaking, deep and droning. But it *has* to be a voice because it is saying words.

Not words I could understand, but words. Words that made me keep my head down, half afraid I might be seen and half afraid I might see something. I stayed there sweating and shaking. The smell was making me pretty sick, but that awful, deep droning voice was worse. Saying over and over something like

"E uh shub nigger ath ngaa ryla neb shoggoth.

I can't hope to spell it out the way it sounded, but I heard it enough times to remember. I was still listening when the smell got awful thick and I guess I must have fainted because when I woke up the voice was gone and it was getting quite dark.

I ran all the way home that night, but not before I saw where the thing had stood when it talked—and it *was* a thing.

No human being can leave tracks in the mud like goat's hoofs all green with slime that smell awful—not four or eight, but a couple *hundred!*

I DIDN'T tell Aunt Lucy or Uncle Fred. But that night when I went to bed I had terrible dreams. I thought I was back in the glen, only this time I could see the thing. It was real tall and all inky-black, without any particular shape except a lot of black ropes with ends like hoofs on it. I mean, it had a shape but it kep changing—all bulgy and squirming into different sizes. They was a lot of mouths all over the thing like puckered up leaves on branches.

That's as close as I can come. The mouths was like leaves and the whole thing was like a tree in the wind, a black tree with lots of branches trailing the ground, and a whole lot of roots ending in hoofs. And that green slime dribbling out of the mouths and down the legs was like sap!

Next day I remembered to look in a book Aunt Lucy had downstairs. It was called a mythology. This book told about some people who lived over in England and France in the old days and was called Druids. They worshiped trees and thought they was alive. Maybe this thing was like what they worshiped—called a nature-spirit.

But these Druids lived across the ocean, so how could it be? I did a lot of thinking about it the next couple days, and you can bet I didn't go out to play in those woods again.

At last I figgered it out something like this.

Maybe those Druids got chased out of the forests over in England and France and some of them was smart enough to build boats and come across the ocean like old Leaf Erikson is supposed to have. Then they could maybe settle in the woods back here

and frighten away the Indians with their magic spells.

They would know how to hide themselves away in the swamps and go right on with their heathen worshiping and call up these spirits out of the ground or wherever they come from.

Indians use to believe that white gods come from out of the sea a long time ago. What if that was just another way of telling how the Druids got here? Some real civilized Indians down in Mexico or South America—Aztecs or Inkas, I guess—said a white god come over in a boat and taught them all kinds of magic. Couldn't he of been a Druid?

That would explain Grandma's stories about *them ones,* too.

Those Druids hiding in the swamps would be the ones who did the drumming and pounding and lit the fires on the hills. And they would be calling up *them ones,* the tree spirits or whatever, out of the earth. Then they would make sacrefices. Those Druids always made sacrefices with blood, just like the old witches. And didn't Grandma tell about people who lived too near the hills disappearing and never being found again?

We lived in a spot just exactly like that.

And it was getting close to Halloween. That was the big time, Grandma always said.

I began to wonder—how soon now?

Got so scared I didn't go out of the house. Aunt Lucy made me take a tonic, said I looked peaked. Guess I did. All I know is one afternoon when I heard a buggy coming through the woods I ran and hid under the bed.

But it was only Cap Pritchett with the mail. Uncle Fred got it and come in all excited with a letter.

Cousin Osborne was coming to stay with us. He was kin to Aunt Lucy and he had a vacation and he wanted to stay a week. He'd get here on the same train I did—the only train they was passing through these parts—on noon, October 25th.

For the next few days we was all so excited that I forgot all my crazy notions for a spell. Uncle Fred fixed up the back room for Cousin Osborne to sleep in and I helped him with the carpenter parts of the job.

DAYS got shorter right along, and the nights was all cold with big winds. It was pretty brisk the morning of the 25th and Uncle Fred bundled up warm to drive through the woods. He meant to fetch Cousin Osborne at noon, and it was seven mile to the station. He wouldn't take me, and I didn't beg. Them woods was too full of creaking and rustling sounds from the wind—sounds that might be something else, too.

Well, he left, and Aunt Lucy and I stayed in the house. She was putting up preserves now—plums—for over the winter season. I washed out jars from the well.

Seems like I should have told about them having two wells. A new one with a big shiny pump, close to the house. Then an old stone one out by the barn, with the pump gone. It never had been any good, Uncle Fred said, it was there when they bought the place. Water was all slimy. Something funny about it, because even without a pump, sometimes it seemed to back up. Uncle Fred couldn't figure it out, but some mornings water would be running out over the sides—green, slimy water that smelled terrible.

We kep away from it and I was by the new well, till along about noon when it started in to cloud up. Aunt Lucy fixed lunch, and it started to rain hard with thunder rolling in off the big hills in the west.

Seemed to me Uncle Fred and Cousin Osborne was going to have troubles getting home in the storm, but Aunt Lucy didn't fret about it—just made me help her put up the stock.

Come five o'clock, getting dark, and still no Uncle Fred. Then we begun to worry. Maybe the train was late, or something happened to the horse or buggy.

Six o'clock and still no Uncle Fred. The rain stopped, but you could still hear the thunder sort of growling off in the hills, and the wet branches kep dripping down in the woods, making a sound like women laughing.

Maybe the road was too bad for them to get through. Buggy might bog down in

the mud. Perhaps they decided to stay in the deepo over night.

Seven o'clock and it was pitch dark outside. No rain sounds any more. Aunt Lucy was awful worried. She said for us to go out and post a lantern on the fence rail by the road.

WE WENT down the path to the fence. It was dark and the wind had died down. Everything was still, like in the deep part of the woods. I felt kind of scared just walking down the path with Aunt Lucy—like something was out there in the quiet dark, someplace, waiting to grab me.

We lit the lantern and stood there looking down the dark road and, "What's that?" said Aunt Lucy, real sharp. I listened and heard a drumming sound far away.

"Horse and buggy," I said. Aunt Lucy perked up.

"You're right," she says, all at once. And it is, because we see it. The horse is running fast and the buggy lurches behind it, crazy-like. It don't even take a second look to see something has happened, because the buggy don't stop by the gate but keeps going up to the barn with Aunt Lucy and me running through the mud after the horse. The horse is all full of lather and foam, and when it stops it can't stand still. Aunt Lucy and I wait for Uncle Fred and Cousin Osborne to step out, but nothing happens. We look inside.

There isn't anybody in the buggy at all.

Aunt Lucy says, "Oh!" in a real loud voice and then faints. I had to carry her back to the house and get her into bed.

I waited almost all night by the window, but Uncle Fred and Cousin Osborne never showed up. Never.

The next few days was awful. They was nothing in the buggy for a clue like to what happened, and Aunt Lucy wouldn't let me go along the road into town or even to the station through the woods.

The next morning the horse was dead in the barn, and of course we would of had to walk to the deepo or all those miles to Warren's farm. Aunt Lucy was scared to go and scared to stay and she allowed as how when Cap Pritchett comes by we had best go with him over to town and make a report and then stay there until we found out what happened.

Me, I had my own ideas what happened. Halloween was only a few days away now, and maybe *them ones* had snatched Uncle Fred and Cousin Osborne for sacrefice. *Them ones* or the Druids. The mythology book said Druids could even raise storms if they wanted to with their spells.

No sense talking to Aunt Lucy, though. She was like out of her head with worry, anyway, just rocking back and forth and mumbling over and over, "They're gone" and "Fred always warned me" and "No use, no use." I had to get the meals and tend to stock myself. And nights it was hard to sleep, because I kep listening for drums. I never heard any, though, but still it was better than sleeping and having those dreams.

Dreams about the black thing like a tree, walking through the woods and sort of rooting itself to one particular spot so it could pray with all those mouths—pray down to that old god in the ground below.

I don't know where I got the idea that was how it prayed—by sort of attaching its mouths to the ground. Maybe it was on account of seeing the green slime. Or had I really seen it? I'd never gone back to look. Maybe it was all in my head—the Druid story and about *them ones* and the voice that said "shoggoth" and all the rest.

But then, where was Cousin Osborne and Uncle Fred? And what scared the horse so it up and died the next day?

Thoughts kep going round and round in my head, chasing each other, but all I knew was we'd be out of here by Halloween night.

Because Halloween was on a Thursday, and Cap Pritchett would come and we could ride to town with him.

Night before I made Aunt Lucy pack and we got all ready, and then I settled down to sleep. There was no noises, and for the first time I felt a little better.

Only the dreams come again. I dreamed a bunch of men come in the night and crawled through the parlor bedroom window where Aunt Lucy slept and got her. They tied her up and took her away, all quiet, in the dark, because they had cat-eyes and didn't need light to see.

The dream scared me so I woke up while it was just breaking into dawn. I went down the hall to Aunt Lucy right away.

She was gone.

The window was wide open like in my dream, and some of the blankets was torn.

Ground was hard outside the window and I didn't see footprints or anything. But she was gone.

I guess I cried then.

It's hard to remember what I did next. Didn't want breakfast. Went out hollering "Aunt Lucy" and not expecting any answer. I walked to the barn and the door was open and the cows were gone. Saw one or two prints going out the yard and up the road, but I didn't think it was safe to follow them.

Some time later I went over to the well and then I cried again because the water was all slimy green in the new one, just like the old.

When I saw that I knew I was right. *Them ones* must of come in the night and they wasn't even trying to hide their doings any more. Like they was sure of things.

Tonight was Halloween. I had to get out of here. If *them ones* was watching and waiting, I couldn't depend on Cap Pritchett showing up this afternoon. I'd have to chance it down the road and I'd better start walking now, in the morning, while it was still light enough to make town.

So I rummaged around and found a little money in Uncle Fred's drawer of the bureau and Cousin Osborne's letter with the address in Kingsport he wrote it from. That's where I'd have to go after I told folks in town what happened. I'd have some kin there.

I wondered if they'd believe me in town when I told them about the way Uncle Fred had disappeared and Aunt Lucy, and about *them* stealing the cattle for a sacrefice and about the green slime in the well where something had stopped to drink. I wondered if they would know about the drums and the lights on the hills tonight and if they was going to get up a party and come back this evening to try and catch *them ones* and what they meant to call up rumbling out of the earth. I wondered if they knew what a "shoggoth" was.

Well, whether they did or not, I couldn't stay and find out for myself. So I packed up my satchel and got ready to leave. Must of been around noon and everything was still.

I went to the door and stepped outside, not bothering to lock it behind me. Why should I with nobody around for miles?

Then I heard the noise down the road.

Footsteps.

Somebody walking along the road, just around the bend.

I stood still for a minute, waiting to see, waiting to run.

Then he come along.

HE WAS tall and thin, and looked something like Uncle Fred only a lot younger and without a beard, and he was wearing a nice city kind of suit and a crush hat. He smiled when he saw me and come marching up like he knowed who I was.

"Hello, Willie," he said.

I didn't say nothing, I was so confuzed.

"Don't you know me?" he said. "I'm Cousin Osborne. Your Cousin Frank." He held out his hand to shake. "But then I guess you wouldn't remember, would you? Last time I saw you, you were only a baby."

"But I thought you were suppose to come last week," I said. "We expected you on the 25th."

"Didn't you get my telegram?" he asked. "I had business."

I shook my head. "We never get nothing here unless the mail delivers it on Thursdays. Maybe it's at the station."

Cousin Osborne grinned. "You are pretty well off the beaten track at that. Nobody at the station this noon. I was hoping Fred would come along with the buggy so I wouldn't have to walk, but no luck."

"You walked all the way?" I asked.

"That's right."

"And you come on the train?"

Cousin Osborne nodded.

"Then where's your suitcase?"

"I left it at the deepo," he told me. "Too far to fetch it along. I thought Fred would drive me back there in the buggy to pick it up." He noticed my luggage for the first time. "But wait a minute—where are you going with a suitcase, son?"

Well, there was nothing else for me to do but tell him everything that happened.

So I said for him to come into the house and set down and I'd explain.

We went back in and he fixed some coffee and I made a couple sanwiches and we ate, and then I told him about Uncle Fred going to the deepo and not coming back, and about the horse and then what happened to Aunt Lucy. I left out the part about me in the woods, of course, and I didn't even hint at *them ones*. But I told him I was scared and figgered on walking to town today before dark.

Cousin Osborne he listened to me, nodding and not saying much or interrupting.

"Now you can see why we got to go, right away," I said. "Whatever come after them will be coming after us, and I don't want to spend another night here."

Cousin Osborne stood up. "You may be right, Willie," he said. "But dont let your imagination run away with you, son. Try to seperate fact from fancy. Your Aunt and Uncle have disappeared. That's fact. But this other nonsense about things in the woods coming after you—that's fancy. Reminds me of all that silly talk I heard back home, in Arkham. And for some reason there seems to be more of it around this time of year, at Halloween. Why, when I left—"

"Excuse me, Cousin Osborne," I said. "But dont you live in Kingsport?"

"Why to be sure," he told me. "But I did live in Arkham once, and I know the people around here. It's no wonder you were so frightened in the woods and got to imagining things. As it is, I admire your bravery. For a 12 year old, you've acted very sensibly."

"Then lets start walking," I said. "Here it is almost 2 and we better get moving if we want to make town before sundown."

"Not just yet, son," Cousin Osborne said. "I wouldn't feel right about leaving without looking around and seeing what we can discover about this mystery. After all, you

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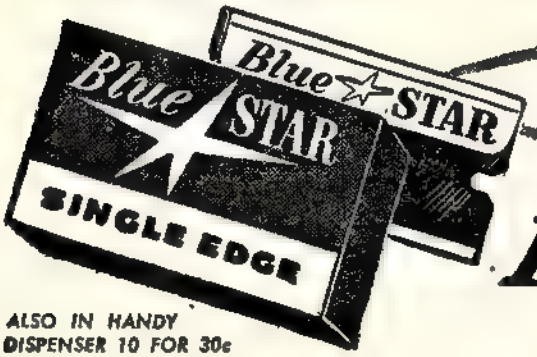

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must understand that we can't just march into town and tell the sheriff some wild nonsense about strange creatures in the woods making off with your Aunt and Uncle. Sensible folks just won't believe such things. They might think I was lying and laugh at me. Why they might even think you had something to do with your Aunt and Uncle's—well, leaving."

"Please," I said. "We got to go, right now."

He shook his head.

I didn't say any more. I might of told him a lot, about what I dreamed and heard and saw and knew—but I figgered it was no use.

Besides, there was some things I didn't want to say to him now that I had talked to him. I was feeling scared again.

First he said he was from Arkham and then when I asked him he said he was from Kingsport but it sounded like a lie to me.

Then he said something about me being scared in the woods and how could he know that? I never told him *that* part at all.

If you want to know what I really thought, I thought maybe he wasn't really Cousin Osborne at all.

And if he wasn't, then—who was he?

I stood up and walked back into the hall.

"Where you going, son?" he asked.

"Outside."

"I'll come with you."

Sure enough, he was watching me. He wasn't going to let me out of his sight. He came over and took my arm, real friendly—but I couldn't break loose. No, he hung on to me. He knew I meant to run for it.

What could I do? All alone in the house in the woods with this man, with night coming on, Halloween night, and *them ones* out there waiting.

WE WENT outside and I noticed it was getting darker already, even in afternoon. Clouds had covered up the sun, and the wind was moving the trees so they stretched out their branches, like they was trying to hold me back. They made a rustling noise, just as if they were whispering things about me, and he sort of looked up at them and listened. Maybe he understood what they were saying. Maybe they were giving him orders.

Then I almost laughed, because he *was* listening to something and now I heard it too.

It was a drumming sound, on the road.

"Cap Pritchett," I said. "He's the mailman. Now we can ride to town with him in the buggy."

"Let me talk to him," he says. "About your Aunt and Uncle. No sense in alarming him, and we dont want any scandal, do we? You just run along inside."

"But Cousin Osborne," I said. "We got to tell the truth."

"Of course, son. But this is a matter for adults. Now run along. I'll call you."

He was real polite about it and even smiled, but all the same he dragged me back up the porch and into the house and slammed the door. I stood there in the dark hall and I could hear Cap Pritchett slow down and call out to him, and him going up to the buggy and talking, and then all I heard was a lot of mumbling, real low. I peeked out through a crack in the door and saw them. Cap Pritchett was talking to him friendly, all right, and nothing was wrong.

Except that in a minute or so, Cap Pritchett waved and then he grabbed the reins and the buggy started off again!

Then I knew I'd have to do it, no matter what happened. I opened the door and ran out, suitcase and all, down the path and up the road after the buggy. Cousin Osborne he tried to grab me when I went by, but I ducked around him and yelled, "Wait for me, Cap—I'm coming—take me to town!"

Cap slowed down and stared back, real puzzled. "Willie!" he says. "Why I thought you was gone. He said you went away with Fred and Lucy—"

"Pay no attention," I said. "He didn't want me to go. Take me to town. I'll tell you what really happened. Please, Cap, you got to take me."

"Sure I'll take you, Willie. Hop right up here."

I hopped.

Cousin Osborne came right up to the buggy. "Here, now," he said, real sharp. "You can't leave like this. I forbid it. You're in my custody."

"Don't listen to him," I yelled. "Take me, Cap. Please!"

"Very well," said Cousin Osborne. "If you insist on being unreasonable. We'll all go. I cannot permit you to leave alone."

He smiled at Cap. "You can see the boy is unstrung," he said. "And I trust you will not be disturbed by his imaginings. Living out here like this—well, you understand—he's not quite himself. I'll explain everything on the way to town."

He sort of shrugged at Cap and made signs of tapping his head. Then he smiled again and made to climb up next to us in the buggy seat.

But Cap didn't smile back. "No, you don't," he said. "This boy Willie is a good boy. I know him. I don't know you. Looks as if you done enough explaining already, Mister, when you said Willie had gone away."

"But I merely wanted to avoid talk—you see, I've been called in to doctor the boy—he's mentally unstable—"

"Stables be damned!" Cap spit out some tobacco juice right at Cousin Osborne's feet. "We're going."

Cousin Osborne stopped smiling. "Then I insist you take me with you," he said. And he tried to climb into the buggy.

Cap reached into his jacket and when he pulled his hand out again he had a big pistol in it.

"Git down!" he yelled. "Mister, you're talking to the United States Mail and you don't tell the Government nothing, understand? Now git down before I mess your brains all over this road."

Cousin Osborne scowled, but he got away from the buggy, fast.

He looked at me and shrugged. "You're making a big mistake, Willie," he said.

I didn't even look at him. Cap said, "Gee up," and we went off down the road. The buggy wheels turned faster and faster and pretty soon the farmhouse was out of sight and Cap put his pistol away, and patted me on the shoulder.

"Stop that trembling, Willie," he said. "You're safe now. Nothing to worry about. Be in town little over an hour or so. Now you just set back and tell old Cap all about it."

SO I TOLD him. It took a long time. We kep going through the woods, and before I knew it, it was almost dark. The sun sneaked down and hid behind the hills. The dark began to creep out of the woods on each side of the road, and the trees started to rustle, whispering to the big shadows that followed us.

The horse was clipping and clopping along, and pretty soon they were other noises from far away. Might have been thunder and might have been something else. But it was getting night-time for sure, and it was the night of Halloween.

The road cut off through the hills now, and you could hardly see where the next turn would take you. Besides, it was getting dark awful fast.

"Guess we're in for a spell of rain," Cap said, looking up. "That's thunder, I reckon."

"Drums," I said.

"Drums?"

"At night in the hills you can hear them," I told him. "I heard them all this month. It's *them ones*, getting ready for the Sabbath."

"Sabbath?" Cap looked at me. "Where you hear tell about a Sabbath?"

Then I told him some more about what had happened. I told him all the rest. He didn't say anything, and before long he couldn't of answered me anyway, because the thunder was all around us, and the rain was lashing down on the buggy, on the road, everywhere. It was pitch-black outside now, and the only time we could see was when lightning flashed. I had to yell to make him hear me—yell about the things that caught Uncle Fred and come for Aunt Lucy, the things that took our cattle and then sent Cousin Osborne back to fetch me. I hollered out about what I heard in the woods, too.

IN THE lightning flashes I could see Cap's face. He wasn't smiling or scowling—he just looked like he believed me. And I noticed he had his pistol out again and was holding the reins with one hand even though we were racing along. The horse was so scared he didn't need the whip to keep him running.

The old buggy was lurching and bouncing, and the rain was whistling down in the wind and it was all like an awful dream but it was real. It was real when I hollered out to Cap Pritchett about that time in the woods.

"Shoggoth," I yelled. "What's a shoggoth?"

Cap grabbed my arm, and then the lightning come and I could see his face, with his mouth open. But he wasn't looking at me. He was looking at the road and what was ahead of us.

The trees sort of come together, hanging over the next turn, and in the black it looked as if they were alive—moving and bending and twisting to block our way. Lightning flickered up again and I could see them plain, and also something else.

Something black in the road, something that wasn't a tree. Something big and black, just squatting there, waiting, with ropy arms squirming and reaching.

"Shoggoth!" Cap yelled. But I could scarcely hear him because the thunder was roaring and now the horse let out a scream and I felt the buggy jerk to one side and the horse reared up and we was almost into the black stuff. I could smell an awful smell, and Cap was pointing his pistol and it went off with a bang that was almost as loud as the thunder and almost as loud as the sound we made when we hit the black thing.

Then everything happened at once. The thunder, the horse falling, the shot, and us hitting as the buggy went over. Cap must of had the reins wrapped around his arm, because when the horse fell and the buggy turned over, he went right over the dashboard head first and down into the squirming mess that was the horse—and the black thing that grabbed it. I felt myself falling in the dark, then landing in the mud and gravel of the road.

There was thunder and screaming and another sound which I had heard once before in the woods—a droning sound like a voice.

That's why I never looked back. That's why I didn't even think about being hurt when I landed—just got up and started to run down the road, fast as I could, run down the road in the storm and the dark with the trees squirming and twisting and shaking their heads while they pointed at me with their branches and laughed.

Over the thunder I heard the horse scream and I heard Cap scream, too, but I still didn't look back. The lightning winked on and off, and I ran through the trees now because the road was nothing but mud that dragged me down and sucked at my legs. After a while I began to scream, too, but I couldn't even hear myself for thunder. And more than thunder. I heard drums.

All at once I busted clear of the woods and got to the hills. I ran up, and the drumming got louder, and pretty soon I could see regular, not just when they was lightning. Because they was fires burning on the hill, and the booming of the drums come from there.

I got lost in the noise; the wind shrieking and the trees laughing and the drums pounding. But I stopped in time. I stopped when I saw the fires plain; red and green fires burning in all that rain.

I saw a big white stone in the center of a cleared-off space on top of the hill. The red and green fires was around and behind it, so everything stood out clear against the flames.

They was men around the alter, men with long gray beards and wrinkled-up faces, men throwing awful-smelling stuff on the fires to make them blaze red and green. And they had knives in their hands and I could hear them howling over the storm. In back, squatting on the ground, more men pounded on drums.

PRETTY soon something else come up the hill—two men driving cattle. I could tell it was our cows they drove, drove them right up to the alter and then the men with the knives cut their throats for a sacrefice.

All this I could see in lightning flashes and in the fire lights, and I sort of scooched down so I couldn't get spotted by anyone.

But pretty soon I couldn't see very good any more, on account of the way they threw stuff on the fire. It set up a real thick black smoke. When this smoke come up, the men began to chant and pray louder.

I couldn't hear words, but the sounds was like what I heard back in the woods. I couldn't see too good, but I knew what was going to happen. Two men who had led the cattle went back down the other side of the hill and when they come up again they had new sacrefices. The smoke kep me from seeing plain, but these was two-legged sacrefices, not four. I might of seen better at that, only now I hid my face when they dragged them up to the white alter and used the knives, and the fire and smoke flared up and the drums boomed and they all chanted and called in a loud voice to something waiting over on the other side of the hill.

The ground began to shake.

It was storming, they was thunder and lightning and fire and smoke and chanting and I was scared half out of my wits, but one thing I'll swear to—the ground began to shake. It shook and shivered and they called out to something, and in a minute something came.

It came crawling up the hillside to the alter and the sacrefice, and it was the black thing of my dreams—that black, ropy, slimy jelly tree-thing out of the woods. It crawled up and it flowed up on its hoofs and mouths and snaky arms. And the men bowed and stood back and then it got to the alter where they was something squirming on top, squirming and screaming.

The black thing sort of bent over the alter and then I heard droning sounds over the screaming as it come down. I only watched a minute, but while I watched the black thing began to swell and *grow*.

That finished me. I didn't care any more. I had to run. I got up and I run and run and run, screaming at the top of my lungs no matter who heard.

I kep running and I kep screaming forever, through the woods and the storm, away from that hill and that alter, and then all at once I knew where I was and I was back here at the farmhouse.

Yes, that's what I'd done—run in a circle

and come back. But I couldn't go any further, I couldn't stand the night and the storm. So I run inside here. At first after I locked the door I just lay right down on the floor, all tuckered out from running and crying.

But in a little while I got up and hunted me some nails and a hammer and some of Uncle Fred's boards that wasn't split up into kindling.

I nailed up the door first and then boarded up all the windows. Every last one of them. Guess I worked for hours, tired as I was. When it was all done, the storm died down and it got quiet. Quiet enough for me to lie down on the couch and go to sleep.

Woke up a couple hours ago. It was daylight. I could see it shining through the cracks. From the way the sun come in, I knew it was afternoon already. I'd slept through the whole morning, and nothing had come.

I FIGURED now maybe I could let myself out and make town on foot, like I'd planned yesterday.

But I figgered wrong.

Before I got started taking out the nails, I heard him. It was Cousin Osborne, of course. The man who said he was Cousin Osborne, I mean.

He come into the yard, calling "Willie!" but I didn't answer. Then he tried the door and then the windows. I could hear him pounding and cussing. That was bad.

But then he began mumbling, and that was worse. Because it meant he wasn't out there alone.

I sneaked a look through the crack, but he already went around to the back of the house so I didn't see him or who was with him.

Guess that's just as well, because if I'm right, I wouldn't want to see.

Hearing's bad enough.

Hearing that deep croaking, and then him talking, and then that croaking again.

Smelling that awful smell, like the green slime from the woods and around the well.

The well—they went over to the well in back. And I heard Cousin Osborne say something about, "Wait until dark. We can use the well if you find the gate. Look for the gate."

I know what that means now. The well must be a sort of entrance to the underground place—that's where those Druid men live. And the black thing.

They're out in back now, looking.

I been writing for quite a spell and already the afternoon is going. Peeking through the cracks I can see it's getting dark again.

That's when they'll come for me—when it's dark.

They'll break down the doors or the windows and come and take me. They'll take me down into the well, into the black places where the shoggoths are. There must be a whole world down under the hills, a world where they hide and wait to come out for more sacrefices, more blood. They don't want any humans around, except for sacrefices.

I saw what the black thing did on the alter. I know what's going to happen to me.

Maybe they'll miss the real Cousin Osborne back home and send somebody to find out what become of him. Maybe folks in town will miss Cap Pritchett and go on a search. Maybe they'll come here and find me. But if they don't come soon it will be too late.

That's why I wrote this. It's true, cross my heart, every word of it. And if anyone finds this notebook where I hide it, come and look down the well. The old well, out in back.

Remember what I told about *them ones*. Block up the well and clean out them swamps. No sense looking for me—if I'm not here.

I wish I wasn't so scared. I'm not even scared so much for myself, but for other folks. The ones who might come after and live around here and have the same thing happen—or worse.

YOU just got to believe me. Go to the woods if you dont. Go to the hill. The hill where they had the sacrefice. Maybe the stains are gone and the rain washed the footprints away. Maybe they got rid of the traces of the fire. But the alter stone must

be there. And if it is, you'll know the truth. There should be some big round spots on that stone. Round spots about two feet wide.

I didn't tell about that. At the last, I did look back. I looked back at the big black thing that was a shoggoth. I looked back as it kep swelling and growing. I guess I told about how it could change shape, and how big it got. But you can't hardly imagine how big or what shape and I still dassn't tell.

All I say is look. Look and you'll see what's hiding under the earth in these hills, waiting to creep out and feast and kill some more.

Wait. They're coming now. Getting twilight and I can hear footsteps. And other sounds. Voices. And other sounds. They're banging on the door. And sure enough—they must have a tree or a plank to use for battering it down. The whole place is shaking. I can hear Cousin Osborne yelling, and that droning. The smell is awful, I'm getting sick, and in a minute—

Look at the alter. Then you'll understand what I'm trying to tell. Look at the big round marks, two feet wide, on each side. That's where the big black thing grabbed hold.

Look for the marks and you'll know what I saw, what I'm afraid of, what's still waiting to grab you unless you shut it up forever under the earth.

Black marks two feet wide, but they aren't just marks.

What they really are is *fingerprints!*

The door is busting o————

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By Manly Wade Wellman

THE side road became a rutted track through the pines, and the track became a trail. John Thunstone reflected that he might have known his car would not be able to travel the full distance, and in any case a car seemed out of place in these ancient and uncombed woods. A lumber wagon would be more in keeping; or a riding mule, if John Thunstone were smaller and lighter, a fair load for a mule. He got out of the car, rolled up the windows, and locked the door. Ahead of him a path snaked through the thickets, narrow but well marked by the feet of nobody knew how many years of tramping.

He set his own big feet upon it. His giant body moved with silent grace. John Thunstone was at home in woods, or in wilder places.

He had dressed roughly for this expedition. He had no intention of appearing before the Sandhill woods people as a tailored and foreign invader. So he wore corduroys, a leather jacket that had been cut for him from deer hides of his own shooting, and a shabby felt hat. His strong-boned, trim-mustached face was sober and watchful. It did not betray excitement, or any advance on the wonder he expected to feel when he finished his quest. In his big right hand he carried a walking stick of old dark wood.

"Yep, yep," the courthouse loafers at the town back on the paved road had answered his questions. "Lill Warran—that's her

. . . Already she'd been buried twice over, and dug up both times.

name, Lill, not Lily. Not much lily about her, nothin' so sweet and pure. She was a witch, all right, mister. Sure she was dug out of her grave. Nope, we wasn't there, we just heared about the thing. She was buried, appears like, in Beaver Dam churchyard. And somebody or several somebodies, done dug her up outa there and flung her body clear of the place. Old-time folks believe it's poison bad luck to bury a witch in church ground. You do that and leave her, you might's well forget the church 'cause it won't be blessed no more. Ain't saying we believe that personal; it's country belief."

But the courthouse loafers had not denied the belief in the necessity of digging up a witch. One or two of them contributed tales of Lill Warran. How she was no dry, stooped, gnarled old crone, but a "well-growed" woman, tall and fully and finely made, with a heavy massive wealth of black hair. She wore it knotted into a great loaf at her nape, they said, and that hair shone like fresh-melted tar. Her eyes, they said, were green as green glass, in a brown face, and her mouth—

"Huh!" they'd agreed to Thunstone. "You've come a far piece, and it's like you seen a many fine-looking women. But, mister, ain't no possible argument, you seen

Heading by Vincent Napoli

Lill Warran and that red mouth she had on her, you'd slap a mortgage on your immortal soul to get a kiss of it."

And the inference was, more than one man had mortgaged his immortal soul for a kiss of Lill Warran's mouth. She was dead now. How? Bullet, some said. Accident, said others. But she was dead, and she'd been buried twice over, and dug up the both times.

Gathering this and other information, John Thunstone was on the trail of the end of the story. For it has been John Thunstone's study and career to follow such stories to their end. His story-searches have brought him into adventures of which only the tenth part has been told, and that tenth part the simplest and most believable. His experiences in most cases he has kept to himself. Those experiences have helped, perhaps, to sprinkle gray in his smooth black hair, to make somber his calm, strong face.

THE trail wound, and climbed. Here the wooded land sloped upward. And brush of a spiny species grew under the pines, encroaching so that John Thunstone had to force his way through, like a bull in a swamp. The spines plucked at his leather-clad arms and flanks, like little detaining fingers.

At the top of the slope was the clearing he sought.

It was a clearing in the strictest sense of the word. The tall pines had been axed away, undoubtedly their strong, straight trunks had gone to the building of the log house at the center. And cypress, from some swamp near by, had been split for the heavy shingles on the roof. All around the house was bare sand. Not a spear of grass, not a tuft of weed, grew there. It was as naked as a beach by the sea. Nobody moved in that naked yard, but from behind the house came a noise. *Plink, plink,* rhythmically. *Plink, plink.* Blows of metal on something solid, like stone or masonry.

Moving silently as an Indian, John Thunstone rounded the corner of the log house, paused to make sure of what was beyond, then moved toward it.

A man knelt there, of a height to match John Thunstone's own, but lean and spare, after the fashion of Sandhills brush dwellers. He wore a shabby checked shirt and blue dungaree pants, worn and frayed and washed out to the blue of a robin's egg. His sleeves were rolled to the biceps, showing gaunt, pallid arms with sharp elbows and knotty hands. His back was toward Thunstone. The crown of his tow head was beginning to be bald. Before him on the ground lay a flat rectangle of liver-colored stone. He held a short-handled, heavy-headed hammer in his right hand, and in his left a narrow-pointed wedge, such as is used to split sections of log into fire wood. The point of the wedge he held set against the face of the stone, and with the hammer he tapped the wedge butt. *Plink, plink.* He moved the point. *Plink.*

Still silent as a drifting cloud, Thunstone edged up behind him. He could see what the gaunt man was chiseling upon the stone. The last letter of a series of words, the letters irregular but deep and square:

HERE LIES
LILL WARRAN
TWICE BURIED AND TWICE DUG UP
BY FOOLS AND COWARDS
NOW SHE MAY
REST IN PEACE
SHE WAS A ROSE OF SHARON
A LILY OF THE VALLEY

John Thunstone bent to read the final word, and the bright afternoon sun threw his shadow upon the stone. Immediately the lean man was up and his whole body whipped erect and away on the other side of his work, swift and furtive as a weasel. He stood and stared at John Thunstone, the hammer lowered, the lean-pointed wedge lifted a trifle.

"Who you?" the gaunt man wheezed breathily. He had a sharp face, a nose that projected like a pointed beak, with forehead and chin sloping back from it above and below. His eyes were dark, beady, and close-set. His face was yellow and leathery, and

even the whites of the eyes looked clouded, as with biliousness.

"My name is John Thunstone," Thunstone made reply, as casually as possible. "I'm looking for Mr. Parrell."

"That's me. Pos Parrell."

Pos . . . It was plain to see where the name suited the man. That lean, pointed snout, the meager chin and brow, the sharp eyes, looked like those of an opossum. A suspicious, angry, dangerous opossum.

"What can I do for you?" demanded Pos Parrell. He sounded as if he would like to do something violent.

"I want to ask about Miss Lill Warran," said Thunstone, still quietly, soothingly, as he might speak to a restive dog or horse. "I see you're making a gravestone for her." He pointed with his stick.

"And why not?" snapped Pos Parrell. His thin lips drew back from lean, strong teeth, like stained fangs. "Ain't she to be allowed to rest peacefully in her grave some time?"

"I hope she will," said Thunstone. "I heard at the county seat about how she'd been dragged out of her grave at the churchyard."

Pos Parrell snorted. His hands tightened on hammer and wedge. "Now, mister, what almighty pick is it of yours? Listen, are you the law? If you are, you just trot your law back to the county seat. I'm not studying to hear any law. They won't let her stay buried at Beaver Dam, I've buried her here, and here she'll stay."

"No," Thunstone assured him. "I'm not the law."

"Then what are you? One of them reporters from the newspapers? Whatever you are, get off my place."

"Not until we've talked a bit, Mr. Parrell."

"I'll put you off. I got a right to put you off my place."

Thunstone smiled his most charming. "You do have the right. But could you put me off?"

Pos Parrell raked him with the beady eyes. "You about twice as big as me, but—"

He dropped the hammer. It struck the sand with a grim thud. He whipped the lean wedge over to his right hand, holding it daggerwise.

"Don't try that," warned Thunstone, and his walking stick lifted in his own hand.

Pos Parrell took a stamping stride forward. His left hand clutched at the tip of Thunstone's stick, the wedge lifted in his right.

But Thunstone drew back on the stick's handle. There was a metallic whisper. The lower part of the stick, clamped in Parrell's grasp, stripped away like the sheath of a sword, revealing a long, straight skewer of gleaming blade that set in the handle as in a heft. As Parrell drove forward with his wedge, Thunstone delicately flicked the point of his sword cane across the back of Parrell's fist. Parrell squeaked with pain, and the wedge fell beside the hammer. Next instant Parrell was backing away hurriedly. Thunstone moved lightly, calmly after him, the sword point quivering inches from Parrell's throat.

"Hey!" protested Parrell. "Hey!"

"I'm sorry, but you'll have to listen to me."

"Put that thing down. I quit!"

Thunstone lowered the point, and smiled.

"Let's both quit. Let's talk."

PARRELL subsided. He still held the hollow lower length of the stick. Thunstone took it from him and sheathed his blade.

"You know what?" said Parrell, rather wearily. "That's about the curiousest place I ever seen a man carry a stab weapon."

"It's a sword cane," explained Thunstone, friendly again. "It was made hundreds of years ago. The man who gave it to me said it was made by Saint Dunstan."

"Who was that?"

"He was an Englishman."

"Foreigner, huh?"

"Saint Dunstan was a silversmith," Thunstone told Parrell. "This blade in my stick is made out of silver. Among other things, Saint Dunstan is said to have twisted the devil's nose."

"Lemme see that thing again," Parrell said, and again Thunstone cleared the

blade. "Huh!" grunted Parrell. "It got words on it. I can't make 'em out."

Thunstone's big finger tapped the engraved lettering. *"Sic pereant omnes inimici tui, Domine,"* He read aloud. "That means, 'So perish all thine enemies, O God.' "

"Bible words or charm words?"

"Perhaps both," said Thunstone. "Now, Parrell, I want to be your friend. The people in town are pretty rough in their talk about you."

"And about Lill," said Parrell, so faintly that Thunstone could hardly hear. "But I loved her. Lots of men has loved her, but I reckon I was the only one loving her when she died."

"Tell me," urged Thunstone.

Parrell tramped back toward the cabin, and Thunstone followed. Parrell sat on the door sill and scuffed the dirt with his coarse shoes. He studied the back of his right hand, where Thunstone's skilful flick of the silver blade had raised a thin wale and shed a drop of blood.

"You know, you could have hurt me worse if you'd had a mind," he said.

"I didn't have a mind," Thunstone told him.

Again the shoes scuffed the sand. "I prized up my door stoop stone to make that marker for Lill's grave."

"It's a good one."

Parrell gestured to the edge of the clearing. There, in the shade of the pines, showed a mound of sand, dark with fresh digging, the size and shape of a body.

"I buried her there," he said, "and there she'll stay. At the last end, I reckon, she knowed I loved her and nothing could change it."

A rose of Sharon, a lily of the valley. Lill Warran had been no sweet lily, the court house loafers had insisted. Thunstone squatted on his heels.

"You know," he said, "you'll feel better if you talk about it to somebody who will listen."

"Reckon I will."

And Pos Parrell talked.

Later Thunstone wrote down Parrell's story from memory, as a most interesting record of belief in the supernatural, and also belief in a most beautiful and wilful woman.

LILL WARRAN was called a witch because her mother had been one, and her grandmother had been one. Folks said she could curse pigs thin, and curse hens out of laying, and make trees fall on men cutting them. They wouldn't hear of things like that happening by chance. The preacher at Beaver Dam had sworn she said the Lord's Prayer wrong—"Our Father, who *wert* in heaven." Which meant Satan, who'd fallen from the Pearly Gates, the way it says in the book of Isaiah. No, the preacher hadn't read Lill Warran out of church, but she stopped coming, and laughed at the people who mumbled. The old folks hated her, the children were afraid, and the women suspicious. But the men!

"She could get any man," said Parrell. "She got practically all of them. A hunter would leave his gun, a drinker would leave his bottle of stump-hole whiskey, a farmer would leave his plough standing in the field. There was a many wives crying tears because their husbands were out at night, following after Lill Warran. And Nobe Filder hanged himself, everybody knows, because he was to meet Lill and she didn't come, but went that night to a square dance with Newton Henley. And Newton grew to hate her, but he took sick and when he was dying he called on her name."

Pos Parrell had just loved her. She never promised to meet him, she tossed him smiles and chance words, like so many table scraps to a dog. Maybe it was as well. Those who were lovers of Lill Warran worshipped her, then feared and hated her.

That, at least, was witch history as Thunstone had read it and researched it. The old books of the old scholars were full of evidence about such seductive enchantresses, all the way back to the goddesses of dark love—Ishtar, Ashtoreth, Astarte, various names for the same force, terrible in love as the God of War is terrible in battle. To Thunstone's mind came a fragment of the Epic of Gilgamesh, lettered on a Chaldean tablet of clay five millennia ago. Gilamesh had taunted Ishtar's overtures:

Thou fellest in love with the herdsman
Who ever scattered grain for thee,
And daily slaughtered a kid for thee;
Thou smotest him,
Turned him into a wolf. . . .

"It didn't prove nothing," Parrell was protesting. "Only that she was easy to fall in love with and hard to keep."

"What did she live on?" asked Thunstone. "Did her family have anything?"

"Shucks, no. She was orphaned. She lived by herself—they've burned the cabin now. People said she knew spells, so she could witch meat out of smokehouse into her pot, witch meal out of pantries onto her table."

"I've heard of people suspecting that of witches," nodded Thunstone, careful to keep his manner sympathetic. "It's an easy story to make yourself believe."

"I never believed it, not even when—"

Parrell told the climax of the sorry, eerie tale. It had happened a week ago. It had to do with a silver bullet.

FOR silver bullets are sure death to demons, and this was known to a young man by the name of Taylor Howatt, the latest to flutter around the fascinating flame that was Lill Warran. His friends warned him about her, and he wouldn't listen. Not Taylor! Not until there was prowling around his cabin by something that whined and yelped like a beast-varmint—a wolf, the old folks would say, except that wolves hadn't been seen in those parts since the old frontier days. And Taylor Howatt had glimpsed the thing once or twice by moonlight. It was shaggy, it had pointy ears and a pointy muzzle, but it stood up on its two legs, part of the time at least.

"The werewolf story," commented Thunstone, but Parrell continued.

Taylor Howatt knew what to do. He had an old, old deer rifle, the kind made by country gunsmiths as long back as the War with the North. He had the bullet mould, too, and he'd melted down half a silver dollar and cast him a bullet. He'd loaded the deer rifle ready, and listened for several nights to the howls. When the thing came peeking close to an open window, he caught its shape square against the rising moon and fired.

Next day, Lill Warran was found dead on the foot path leading to her own home, and her heart was shot through.

Of course, there'd been a sheriff deputy down. Taylor Howatt was able to claim it was accidental. The people had gathered at Lill's cabin, and there they'd found stuff, they said. One claimed a side of bacon he said had hung in his smoke house. And another found a book.

"Book?" said John Thunstone quickly. For books are generally interesting properties in stories like the story of Lill Warran.

"I've been told about it by three folks who swore they seen it," replied Parrell. "Me myself, I didn't see it, so I hold I ain't called on to judge of it."

"What did those three people tell you about it?"

"Well—it was hairy like. The cover all hairy and dark, like the skin of a black bear. And inside it had three parts."

"The first part," said Thunstone, "was written with red ink on white paper. The second part, with black ink on red paper. And the third, black paper, written on with—"

"You been talking to them other folks!" accused Parrell, half starting up.

"No. Though I heard the book mentioned at the court house. It's just that I've heard of such books before. The third part of the book, black paper, is written on with white ink that will shine in the dark, so that it can be read without light."

"Then them folks mocking me heard what you heard about the like of the book. They made it up to vex my soul."

"Maybe," agreed Thunstone, though he doubted that the people of the Sandhills brush would have so much knowledge of classical and rare grimoires. "Go on."

The way Parrell had heard the book explained, the first part—red ink on white paper—was made up of rather simple charms, to cure rheumatism or sore eyes, with one or two more interesting spells that concerned the winning of love or the causing of a wearisome lover to depart. The second, the black ink on red, had the

charm to bring food from the stores of neighbors, as well as something that purported to make the practitioner invisible, and something else that aided in the construction of a mirror in which one could see far away scenes and actions.

"And the black part of the book?" asked Thunstone, more calmly than he felt.

"Nobody got that far."

"Good," said Thunstone thankfully. He himself would have thought twice, and more than twice, before reading the shiny letters in the black third section of such a book.

"The preacher took it. Said he locked it in his desk. Next day it was gone. Folks think it went back to Satan himself."

Folks might not be far wrong, thought Thunstone, but did not say as much aloud.

PARRELL'S voice was wretched as he finished his narrative. Lill Warran had had no kinsmen, none who would claim her body at least. So he, Parrell, had claimed it—bought a coffin and paid for a plot in Beaver Dam churchyard. He and an undertaker's helper had been alone at the burying of Lill Warran.

"Since nobody wanted to be Christian, nothing was said from the Bible at the burying," Parrell told Thunstone. "I did say a little verse of a song I remembered, I always remembered, when I thought of her. This is what it was."

He half-crooned the rhyme:

"The raven crow is a coal, coal black,
The jay is a purple blue,
If ever I forget my own fair love,
Let my heart melt away like dew."

Thunstone wondered how old the song was. "Then?" he prompted.

"You know the rest. The morning after, they tore her up out of the grave and flung her in my yard. I found her lying near to my doorstep, the one I just now cut for her gravestone." Parrell nodded toward where it lay. "I took her and buried her again. And this morning it was the same. There she lay. So let them all go curse. I buried her yonder, and yonder she'll stay, or if anybody says different I'll argue with something more than a law book. Did I do wrong, mister?"

"Not you," said Thunstone. "You did what your heart told you."

"Thanks. Thank you kindly. Like you said, I do feel better for talking it over." Parrell rose. "I'm going to set up that stone."

Thunstone helped him. The weight of the slab taxed their strength. Parrell drove it into the sand at the head of the grave. Then he looked to where the sun was sinking behind the pines.

"You won't be getting back away from here before it's dark and hard to pick the way. I'll be honored if you stopped here tonight. Not much of a bed or supper doings, but if you'll so be kind—"

"Thank you," said Thunstone, who had been wondering how to manage an overnight stay.

They entered the front room of the little cabin. Inside it was finished in boards, rough sawn but evenly fitted into place. There was an old table, old chairs, a very old cook stove, pans hanging to nails on the walls. Parrell beckoned Thunstone to where a picture was tacked to a wall.

"It's her," he said.

The photograph was cheap, and some slipshod studio artist had touched it up with colors. But Thunstone could see what sort of woman Lill Warran had been. The picture was half length, and she wore a snug dress with large flower figuring. She smiled into the camera, with the wide full mouth of which he had heard. Her eyes were slanting, mocking, and lustrous. Her head was proud on fine shoulders. Round and deep was the bosom into which a silver bullet had been sent by the old deer rifle of Taylor Howatt.

"You see why I loved her," said Parrell.

"I see," Thunstone assured him.

PARRELL cooked for them. There was corn bread and syrup, and a plate of rib meat, hearty fare. Despite his sorrow, Parrell ate well of his own cooking. When the meal was finished, Parrell bowed and mumbled an old country blessing. They

went out into the yard. Parrell walked slowly to the grave of Lill Warran and gazed down at it. Thunstone moved in among the trees, saw something that grew, and stooped to gouge it out.

"What you gathering?" called Parrell.

"Just an odd little growth," Thunstone called back, and pulled another. They were the roots called throughout the south by the name of John the Conqueror, great specifics against enchantment. Thunstone filled his pockets with them, and walked back to join Parrell.

"I'm glad you came along, Mr. Thunstone," said Parrell. His opossum face was touched with a shy smile. "I've lived alone for years, but never so lonely as the last week."

Together they entered the house. Parrell found and lighted an oil lamp, and immediately Thunstone felt the impact of eyes from across the room. Swiftly facing that way, he gazed into the face of the portrait of Lill Warran. The pictured smile seemed to taunt and defy him, and to invite him as well. What had the man leered at the court house? *You'd slap a mortgage on your immortal soul to get a kiss.* That picture was enough to convince Thunstone that better men than pitiful, spindling Pos Parrell could find Lill Warran herself irresistible.

"I'll make you up a pallet bed here," offered Parrell.

"You needn't bother for me," Thunstone said, but Parrell opened a battered old wooden chest and brought out a quilt, another. As he spread them out, Thunstone recognized the ancient and famous patterns of the quilt work. Kentucky Blazing Star, that was one of them. Another was True Love Fancy.

"My old mamma made them," Parrell informed him.

Parrell folded the quilts into a pallet along the wall. "Sure you'll be all right? You won't prefer to take my bed."

"I've slept a lot harder than what you're fixing for me," Thunstone quickly assured him.

They sat at a table and talked. Parrell's thoughts were still for his lost love. He

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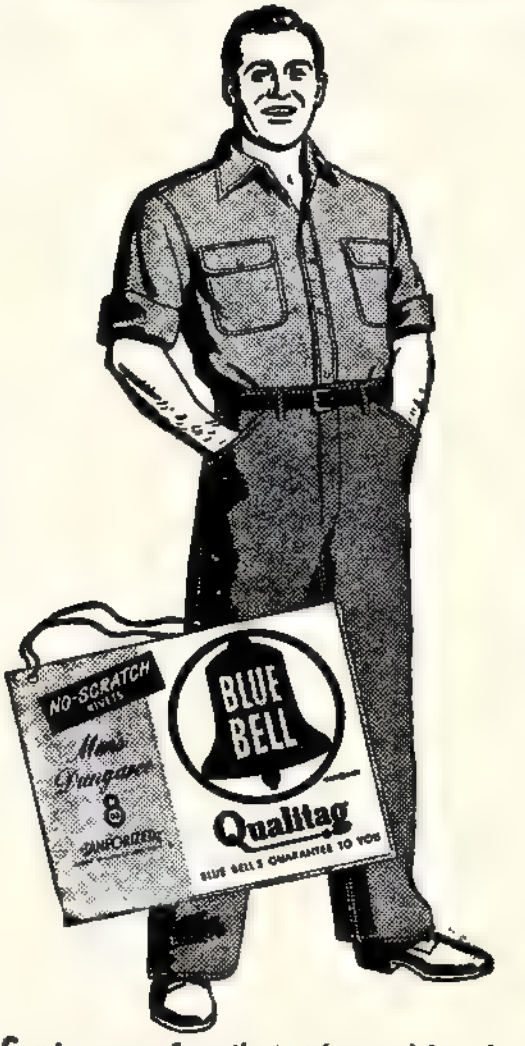

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spoke of her, earnestly, revealingly. Once or twice Thunstone suspected him of trying for poetic speech.

"I would look at her," said Parrell, "and it was like hearing, not seeing."

"Hearing what?"

"Hearing—well, more than anything else it was like the sound of a fiddle, played prettier than you ever heard. Prettier than I can ever play."

Thunstone had seen the battered fiddle-case on a hand-hewn shelf beside the door of the rear room which was apparently Parrell's sleeping quarters, but he had not mentioned it. "Suppose you play us something now," he suggested.

Parrell swallowed. "Play music? With her lying out there in her grave?"

"She wouldn't object, if she knew. Playing the fiddle gives you pleasure, doesn't it?"

Parrell seemed to need no more bidding. He rose, opened the case, and brought out the fiddle. It was old and dark, and he tuned it with fingers diffidently skilful. Thunstone looked at him. "Where did you get it? The fiddle, I mean."

"Oh, my granddaddy inherited it to me. I was the onliest grandboy he had cared to learn."

"Where did he get it?"

"I don't rightly know how to tell you that. I always heard a foreigner fellow—I mean a sure-enough foreigner from Europe or some place, not just somebody from some other part of the country—gave it to my granddaddy, or either traded it to him."

Thunstone knew something about violins, and judged that this one was worth a sum that would surprise Parrell, if no more than mentioned. Thunstone did not mention any sum. He only said, "Play something, why not?"

Parrell grinned, showing his lean teeth. He tucked the instrument against his jowl and played. He was erratic but vigorous; with training, he might have been brilliant. The music soared, wailed, thundered, and died down. "That was interesting," said Thunstone. "What was it?"

"Just something I sort of figured out for myself," said Parrell apologetically. "I do that once in a while, but not lots. Folks would rather hear the old songs—things they know, like Arkansaw Traveller and Fire In the Mountains. I generally play my own stuff to myself, alone here in the evenings." Parrell laid down the instrument. "My fiddle's kept me company, sometimes at night when I wished Lill was with me."

"Did you ever know," said Thunstone, "why we have so many fiddles in the American country localities?"

"Never heard that I recollect."

"In the beginnings of America," Thunstone told him, "frontier homes were lonely and there were wild beasts around. Wolves, mostly."

"Not now," put in Parrell. "Remember that crazy yarn Taylor Howatt told about shooting at a wolf, and there hasn't been a wolf around here since I don't know when."

"Maybe not now, but there were wolves in the old days. And the strains of fiddle music hurt the ears of the wolves and kept them away."

"There may be a lot in what you say," nodded Parrell, and put his instrument back into its box. "Listen, I'm tired. I've not slept fit for a dog these past six nights. But now, with you here, talking sense like you have—" Parrell paused, stretched and yawned. "If it's all right with you, I'll go sleep a while."

"Good night, Parrell," said Thunstone, and watched his host go into the rear room and close the door.

THEN Thunstone went outside. It was quiet and starry, and the moon rose, half of its disk gleaming pale. He took from his pockets the roots of John the Conqueror, placing one on the sill above the door, another above the front window, and so on around the shanty. Returning, he entered the front room again, turned up the lamp a trifle, and spread out a piece of paper. He produced a pen and began to write:

My Dear de Grandin:

I know your own investigations kept you from coming here with me, but I wonder if this thing isn't more interest-

ing, if not more important, than what you chose to stay and do in New Jersey.

The rumors about Lill Warran, as outlined to you in the letter I wrote this morning, are mostly confirmed. Here, however, are the new items I've uncovered:

Strong evidence of the worst type of grimoire. I refer to one with white, red and black sections. Since it's mentioned in this case, I incline to believe there was one—these country folk could hardly make up such a grimoire out of their heads. Lill Warran, it seems, had a copy, which later vanished from a locked drawer. Naturally! Or, super-naturally!

Presence of a werewolf. One Taylor Howatt was sure enough to make himself a silver bullet, and to use it effectively. He fired at a hairy, point-eared monster, and it was Lill Warran they picked up dead. This item naturally suggests the next.

Nobody knows the person or persons who turned Lill Warran twice out of her grave. Most people of the region are rather smugly pleased at the report that Lill Warran wasn't allowed rest in consecrated churchyard soil, and Pos Parrell, grief-stricken, has buried her in his yard, where he intends that she will have peace. But, de Grandin, you will already have guessed the truth they have failed even to imagine: if Lill Warran was indeed a werewolf—and the black section of the grimoire undoubtedly told her how to be one at will—if, I say, Lill Warran was a werewolf . . .

Thunstone sat up in the chair, the pen in his fingers. Somebody, or something, moved stealthily in the darkness outside.

There was a tapping whisper at the screen Pos Parrell had nailed over the window. Thunstone grimly forebore to glance. He made himself yawn, a broad hand covering his mouth—the reflex gesture, he meditated as he yawned, born of generations past who feared lest the soul might be snatched through the open mouth by a demon. Slowly he capped his pen, and laid it upon the unfinished letter to de Grandin. He rose, stretched, and tossed aside his leather jacket. He stopped and pretended to untie his shoes, but did not take them off. Finally, cupping his palm around the top of the lamp chimney, he blew out the light. He moved to where Parrell had spread the pallet of quilts and lay down upon them. He began to breathe deeply and regularly. One hand, relaxed in its seeming, rested within an inch of the sword cane.

The climax of the adventure was upon him, he knew very well; but in the moments

to follow he must possess himself with calm, must appear to be asleep in a manner to deceive the most skeptical observer.

Thus determined, he resolutely relaxed, from the toe-joints up. He let his big jaw go slack, his big hands curl open. He continued to breathe deeply and regularly, like a sleeper. Hardest of all was the task of conquering the swift race of heart and pulse, but John Thunstone had learned how to do that, too, because of necessity many times before. So completely did he contrive to pretend slumber that his mind went dreamy and vague around the edges. He seemed to float a little free of the pallet, to feel awareness at not too great a distance of the gates of dreamland.

But his ears were tuned to search out sounds. And outside in the dark the unknown creature continued its stealthy round.

It paused—just in front of the door, as John Thunstone judged. It knew that the root of John the Conqueror lay there, an obstacle; but not an obstacle that completely baffled. Such an herb, to turn back what Thunstone felt sure was besieging the dark cabin, would need to be wolfbane or garlic: or, for what grew naturally in these parts of the world, French lilac. John the Conqueror—Big John or Little John, as woodland gatherers defined the two varieties—was only "used to win," and might not assure victory. All it could do, certainly, was slow up the advance of the besieger.

Under his breath, very soft and very low, John Thunstone began to mutter a saying taught him by a white magician in a faraway city, half a prayer and half a spell against evil enemies:

"Two wicked eyes have overshadowed us, but two holy eyes are fixed upon us; the eyes of Saint Dunstan, who smote and shamed the devil. Beware, wicked one; beware twice, wicked one; beware thrice . . ."

In the next room, Thunstone could hear sounds. They were sounds as of dull, careful pecking. They came from the direction in which, as he had seen, was set the closed casement window of Pos Parrell's sleeping chamber.

With the utter silence he knew how to keep, Thunstone rolled from his pallet, lying for a moment face down on the floor. He drew up one knee and both hands, and rose to his full height. In one hand he brought along the sword cane.

The pecking sound persisted as he slid one foot along the rough planks of the floor, praying that no creak would sound. He managed a step, another, a third. He was at the door leading to the next room.

His free hand groped for a knob. There was none, only a latch string. Thunstone pulled, and the door sagged silently open.

He looked into a room, the dimness of which was washed by light from the moon outside. In the window, silhouetted against the four panes, showed the outline of head and shoulders. A tinkling whisper, and one of the panes fell inward, to shatter musically on the boards below. Something had picked away the putty. A dark arm crept in, weaving like a snake, to fumble at the catch. A moment later the window was open, and something thrust itself in, made the passage and landed on the floor.

The moonlight gave him a better look at the shape as it rose from all fours and faced toward the cot where Pos Parrell lay, silent and slack as though he were drugged.

John Thunstone knew that face from the picture in the room where he had slept. It had the slanted, lustrous eyes, the cloud of hair—not clubbed, but hanging in a great thunder cloud on either side of the face. And the wide, full mouth did not smile, but quivered as by some overwhelming pulse.

"Pos," whispered the mouth of Lill Warran.

She wore a white robelike garment, such as is put on dead women in that country. Its wide, winglike sleeves swaddled her arms, but it fell free of the smooth, pale shoulders, the fine upper slope of the bosom. Now as in life, Lill Warran was a forbiddingly beautiful creature. She seemed to sway, to float toward Parrell.

"You love me," she breathed at him.

The sleeper stirred for the first time. He turned toward her, a hand moved sleepily, almost as though it beckoned her. Lill Warran winnowed to the very bedside.

"Stop where you are!" called John Thun-

stone, and strode into the room, and toward the bed.

She paused, a hand on the blanket that covered Parrell. Her face turned toward Thunstone, the moonlight playing upon it. Her mocking smile possessed her lips.

"You were wise enough to guess most of me," she said. "Are you going to be fool enough to try to stop what is bound to happen?"

"You won't touch him," said Thunstone.

She chuckled. "Don't be afraid to shout. You cannot waken Pos Parrell tonight—not while I stand here. He loves me. He always loved me. The others loved and then hated. But he loves—though he thinks I am dead—"

She sounded archaic, she sounded measured and stilted, as though she quoted ill-rehearsed lines from some old play. That was in order, Thunstone knew.

"He loves you, that's certain," agreed Thunstone. "That means you recognize his helplessness. You think that his love makes him your easy prey. You didn't reckon with me."

"Who are you?"

"My name is John Thunstone."

Lill Warran glared, her lips writhed back. She seemed as though she would spit.

"I've heard that name. John Thunstone! Shall I not dispose of you, right now and at once, you fool?"

SHE took a step away from the bed. Her hands lifted, the winglike sleeves slipped back from them. She crooked her fingers, talon fashion, and Thunstone saw the length and sharpness of her nails.

Lill Warran laughed.

"Fools have their own reward. Destruction!"

Thunstone stood with feet apart. The cane lay across his body, its handle in his right fist, the fingers of his left hand clasping around the lower shank that made a sheath.

"You have a stick," said Lill Warran. "Do you think you can beat me away, like a dog?"

"I do."

"You cannot even move, John Thunstone!" Her hands weaved in the air, like the hands of a hypnotist. "You're a toy for me! I remember hearing a poem once: 'A fool there was—' " She paused, laughing.

"Remember the title of that poem?" he said, almost sweetly, and she screamed, like the largest and loudest of bats, and leaped.

In that instant, Thunstone cleared the long silver rapier from its hiding, and, as swiftly as she, extended his arm like a fencer in riposte.

Upon the needle-pointed blade, Lill Warran skewered herself. He felt the point slip easily, smoothly, into the flesh of her bosom. It grated on a bone somewhere, then slid past and through. Lill Warran's body slammed to the very hilt, and for a moment she was no more than arm's length from him. Her eyes grew round, her mouth opened wide, but only a whisper of breath came from it.

Then she fell backward, slack as an empty garment, and as Thunstone cleared his blade she thudded on the floor and lay with her arms flung out to right and left, as though crucified.

From his hip pocket Thunstone fished a handkerchief and wiped away the blood that ran from point to base of the silver weapon forged centuries before by Saint Dunstan, patron of those who face and fight creatures of evil.

To his lips came the prayer engraved upon the blade, and he repeated it aloud: *"Sic pereant omnes inimici, tui, Domine. . . .* So perish all thine enemies, O God."

"Huh?" sleepily said Pos Parrell, and sat up on his cot. He strained his eyes in the dimness. "What you say, Mister? What's happened?"

Thunstone moved toward the bureau, sheathing his silver blade. He struck a match, lifted the chimney from the lamp on the bureau, and lighted it. The room filled with the warm glow from the wick.

Parrell sprang out of bed. "Hey, look. The window's open—it's broke in one pane. Who done that?"

"Somebody from outside," said Thunstone, standing still to watch.

Parrell turned and stared at what was on the floor. "It's Lill!" he bawled in a quivering voice. "Sink their rotten souls to hell,

they come dug her up again and throwed her in here!"

"I don't think so," said Thunstone, and lifted the lamp. "Take a good look."

Moving, he shed light down upon the quiet form of Lill Warran. Parrell knelt beside her, his trembling hands touching the dark stain on her bosom.

"Blood!" he gulped. "That's fresh blood. Her wound was bleeding, right now. She wasn't dead down there in the grave!"

"No," agreed Thunstone quietly. "She wasn't dead down there in the grave. But she's dead now."

Parrell examined her carefully, miserably. "Yes, sir. She's dead now. She won't rise up no more."

"No more," agreed Thunstone again. "And she got out of her grave by her own strength. Nobody dug her up, dead or alive."

Parrell stared from where he knelt. Wonder and puzzlement touched his grief-lined, sharp-snouted face.

"Come out and see," invited Thunstone, and lifted the lamp from where it stood on the bureau. He walked through the front room and out of the door. Parrell tramped at his heels.

The night was quiet, with so little breeze that the flame of the lamp barely flickered. Straight to the graveside Thunstone led Parrell, stopped there and held the lamp high over the freshly opened hole.

"Look, Parrell," Thunstone bade him. "That grave was opened from inside, not outside."

Parrell stooped and stared. One hand crept up and wiped the low, slanting brow.

"You're right, I guess," said Parrell slowly. "It looks like what a fox does when he breaks through at the end of his digging—the dirt's flung outward from below, only bigger'n a fox's hole." Parrell straightened up. His face was like sick tallow in the light of the lamp. "Then it's true, though it looks right pure down impossible. She was in there, alive, and she got out tonight."

"She got out the other two nights," said Thunstone. "I don't think I can explain to you exactly why, but night time was the time of her strength. And each time she came here to you—walked or crept all the way. Each time, again, she could move no more when it was dawn."

"Lill came to me!"

"You loved her, didn't you? That's why she came to you."

PARRELL turned toward the house. "And she must have loved me," he whispered, "to come to me out of the grave. Tonight, she didn't have so far to go. If she'd stayed alive—"

Thunstone started back to the house. "Don't think about that, Parrell. She's certainly dead now, and what she would have done if she'd stayed alive isn't for us to think about."

Parrell made no reply until they had once more entered the front door and walked through to where Lill Warran lay as they had left her. In the light of the lamp Thunstone carried her face was clearly defined.

It was a calm face, a face at peace and a little sorrowful. Yes, a sweet face. Lill Warran may not have looked like that in life, or in life-in-death, but now she was completely dead, she was of a gentle, sleeping beauty. Thunstone could see how Parrell, or any other man, might love a face like that.

"And she came to me, she loved me," breathed Parrell again.

"Yes, she loved you," nodded Thunstone. "In her own way she did love you. Let's take her back to her grave."

Between them they carried her out and to the hole. At its bottom was the simple coffin of pine planks, its lid thrown outward and upward from its burst fastenings. Thunstone and Parrell put the body into the coffin, straightened its slack limbs, and lowered the lid. Parrell brought a spade and a shovel, and they filled and smoothed the grave.

"I'm going to say my little verse again," said Parrell. Standing with head bowed, he mumbled the lines:

"The raven crow is a coal, coal black,
The jay is a purple blue,
If ever I forget my own fair love,
Let my heart melt away like dew."

He looked up at Thunstone, tears streaming down his face. "Now she'll rest in peace."

"That's right. She'll rest in peace. She won't rise again."

"Listen, you mind going back to the house? I'll just watch here till morning. You don't think that'll hurt, do you?"

Thunstone smiled.

"No, it won't hurt. It will be perfectly all right. Because nothing whatever will disturb you."

"Or her," added Parrell.

"Or her," nodded Thunstone. "She won't be disturbed. Just keep remembering her as somebody who loved you, and whose rest will never be interrupted again."

Back in the house, Thunstone brought the lamp to the table where he had interrupted his letter to de Grandin. He took his pen and began writing again:

I was interrupted by events that brought this adventure to a good end. And maybe I'll wait until I see you before I tell you that part of it.

But, to finish my earlier remarks:

If Lill Warran was a werewolf, and killed in her werewolf shape, it follows as a commonplace that she became a vampire after death. You can read as much in Montague Summers, as well as the work of your countryman, Cyprien Robert.

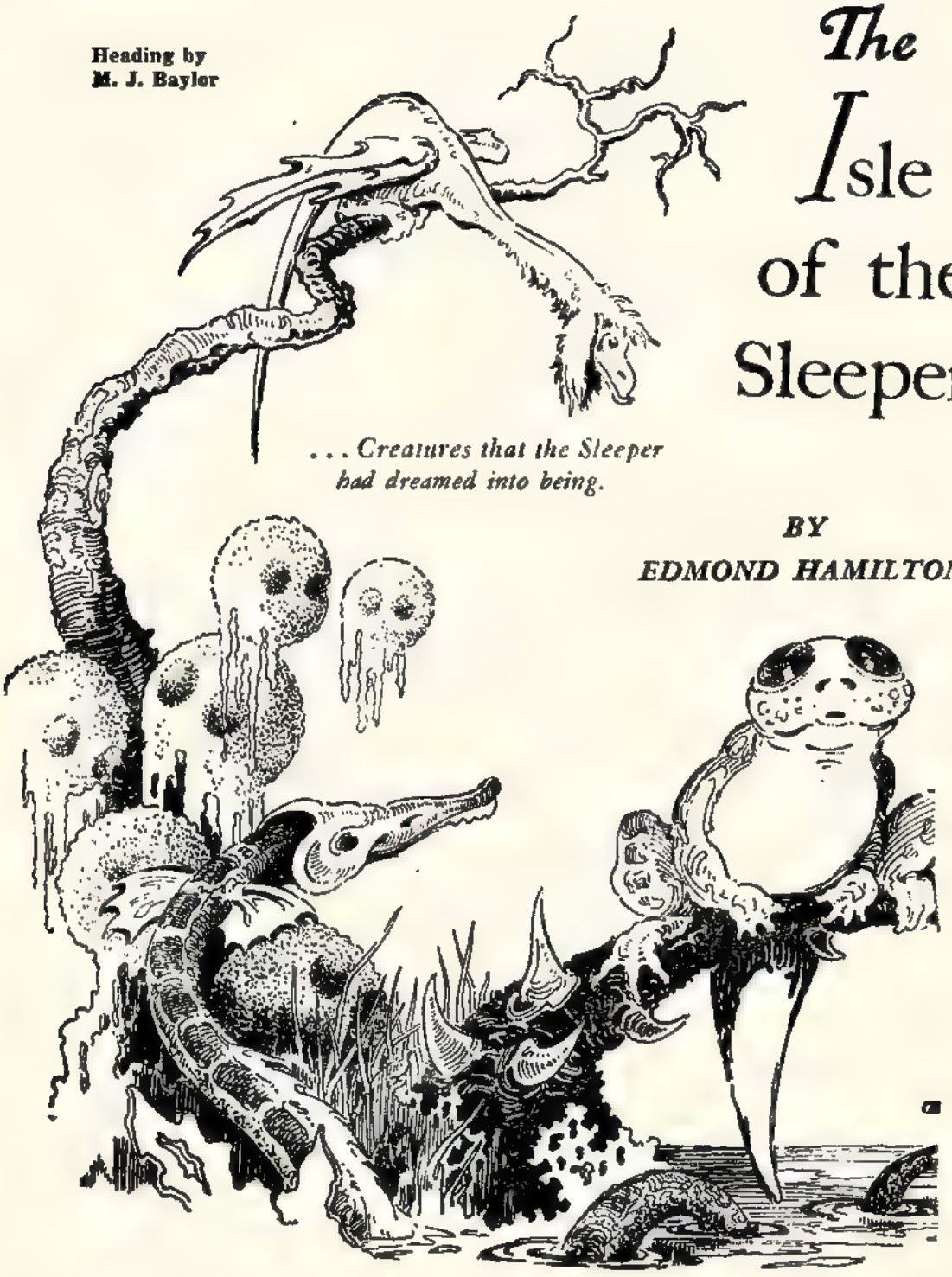
And as a vampire, she would and did return, in a vampire's travesty of affection, to the one living person whose heart still turned to her.

Because I half suspected all this from the moment I got wind of the story of Lill Warran, I brought with me the silver blade forged for just such battles by Saint Dunstan, and it was my weapon of victory.

He finished and folded the letter. Outside, the moon brightened the quiet night, in which it seemed no evil thing could possibly stir.

Heading by
M. J. Baylor

The Isle of the Sleeper



. . . Creatures that the Sleeper had dreamed into being.

BY
EDMOND HAMILTON

GARRISON lay face down on the life-raft and felt the sun slowly cooking his brain. After four days, his only sensations were of heat and thirst; he was too dizzily sick to feel hunger any more. The little raft rose and sank on the long, lazy Pacific swells, and each time it fell, the blue water gently smacked his face.

He knew dimly that he would not last much longer. It was only a matter of hours

now until he would give way and gulp up the blue water that slapped so invitingly at his face, and then he would die rather horribly. Of course a sane man wouldn't drink sea-water, but then a man who has been floating in mid-Pacific four days without food or drink is not quite sane.

He thought bitterly again that the others were the lucky ones, those who had gone to swift death when the explosion sank the *Mary D.* Those others of the crew, all of them, were at peace now, gently drifting and bumping down in the cool shadowed ooze of the bottom. It was only he, jumping instinctively from the freighter deck as the explosion ripped it, who had been unfortunate enough to live.

Garrison began thinking of water again. He knew that was only hastening the end, but he couldn't keep his weakened mind from doing it. Greedy visions floated through his brain, of silver brooks running over brown stones, of bubbling springs and placid rivers and blue lakes. He saw crystal tumblers of ice-water, beaded with frost. He sobbed, his face crushed against the hot, salt-crusted canvas.

Hours had become eternities for him. He did not realize the sun had gone down, until the furnace-blast scorching him eased a little. Then he raised his head, opened bleared, red-rimmed eyes. It was night, and the raft drifted on dark, lulling waters, the sky a jungle thick with stars. Garrison let his face fall again.

How many eternities later was it that a new, startlingly unfamiliar sound impinged on his dimmed consciousness? A dull rasping and grinding, close to his ears. It began and ceased in roughly regular rhythm. Rasp, rasp—then silence. And then the rasp, rasp. . . .

The unfamiliarity of the sound roused in his deadened brain a vague desire to investigate. He raised himself, as slowly and stiffly as a corpse coming alive, upon his elbows. He stared numbly. Two feet in front of his face was solid land.

The life-raft had drifted onto the sandy beach of a dark island, and lay now with one end grinding and rasping into the sand. There was no other sound but the sucking of the surf. The wheeling companies of stars looked solemnly down. The island stretched in front of Garrison, a dark, unguessable mass.

"It's land," he heard a dry voice croak.

Then Garrison realized that the voice was his own. He was conscious that somehow he had staggered to his feet.

"Land," his salt-crusted lips whispered again.

Garrison stepped off the raft, and went to his knees on the sand. He hitched himself up by a miracle of drunken effort, and unsteadily he started forward in a blind, directionless run.

He ran in a clumsy, stooping posture, head sagging, thin hands hanging nervelessly. His dazed eyes could make out nothing in the darkness. He was like a blinded, maddened animal, moving by instinct rather than intelligence.

He slipped in loose sand, and tripped over rocks, but went reeling on. Then he tripped again and fell. And this time he did not get up. His tired body relaxed gratefully, luxuriously. His mind darkened, slipped into a shadowy dusk. He was aware only of the holy, dusky calm taking possession of his mind. This, then, was death? He slipped into darkness with the sigh of a tired child.

But later, Garrison awoke. That was a strange thing, he thought as consciousness first revived, to awake from death. But he knew suddenly that he was not dead. For fierce thirst still burned his throat, and how can a dead man feel thirst? He wrenched open his gummed, swollen eyelids—to the dazzling splash of bright sunshine.

BY CONVULSIVE effort, he got to a sitting position. Then with numbed, wild gaze he stared about him. His mind was too dazed to appreciate the full impact of the surprise, and he felt only a vague wonder at what he saw.

Around him rose a thick forest of unearthly beauty. Huge black-trunked trees towered high above him, shutting out the sky with great masses of silvery foliage. Their interlacing branches were twined with dark, arboring vines. And on the vines grew

enormous, orchid-like blooms, wonderful, tender-hued flowers that cascaded in spilled beauty toward the green turf.

Brilliant macaws and parrots flashed screeching through the flowers, and liquid notes of bird-song tinkled sweetly. In the long, hushed silences, a soft wind wandered whispering through the trees, laden with strange, spicy scents and haunting undertones of exquisite perfume.

Garrison stared dazedly. Then through the trees he saw a shining thread of water, a tiny, fern-fringed brook singing through the woods. The crazed longing of four days burst into raging life within him. He ran weakly forward, with an inarticulate cry. A minute later he was lying flat, crushing the ferns, his face buried in the cool crystal stream.

It took all his will to force himself to stop drinking. He was trembling when he raised his head from the water, and his parched mouth and withered tongue seemed slowly expanding. Tears twitched his eyelids.

"I'm saved," he sobbed hoarsely. "Saved!"

Garrison forced himself to get up and stumble away from the stream. He felt even yet no hunger, but he knew that he needed food.

Close by he found it, a tall tree heavy with round red fruit. The fruit looked and tasted like an apple but had a hard, stone-like core. When he had eaten some of it, he felt a little stronger. And he saw now that he was in no danger of starving, for there were many trees with fruit.

Also, there was plenty of life evident in this hushed, faery forest. Brown hares bolted through the ferns, and flying squirrels shot in dizzy arcs from branch to branch, and monkeys chattered in the distance.

"Lucky, to stumble on this island," he mumbled. "Most islands in this part of the Pacific are just bare rock. Probably isn't very big—and doesn't look inhabited at all."

He started in an unsteady tramp toward the distant boom of the surf. He was astounded, as he went, by the variety of life he glimpsed. Two spotted leopards, bounding up a distant tree. Grunting wild pigs rooting in thickets. He heard a hyena somewhere near him, barking in the brush. Deer in large number, swift and beautiful. It seemed incredible to find such life on a small Pacific island.

Then he emerged from the thick woods onto a narrow, sandy beach. The white blob of the life-raft lay on the sand where the tide had left it. Sweeping his gaze along the shore, Garrison saw that the island was five miles long, and two across. It was all blanketed by the thick forest, a green isle sleeping on the vast bosom of the sea. There were no signs whatever that humans had ever been here.

Garrison started trudging along the shore, for it was easier going on the beach than in the forest. He had gone less than a half-mile when out of the woods beside him suddenly stepped the girl. She appeared so startlingly that he stood frozen, staring at her.

"Lord above!" he exclaimed. "Where did *you* come from?"

She smiled. "My name is Myrrha," she said.

She was a white girl—he saw that first. Then his stunned brain perceived that this girl was young and lovely. He doubted if she was more than seventeen. Her dress was queer—a scanty tunic of soft white cloth, belted with a jeweled girdle. Her ivory shoulders were left bare by it, and its skirt stopped short of her rounded knees.

Her eyes were steady on his face. They were soft, wistful tender black eyes, in which doubt mixed with glad eagerness. Her red-ripe lips were parted a little in excitement. Black silky hair was combed back in a soft mass from her broad, low brow.

"Myrrha?" Garrison repeated dazedly.

"From in the forest, I saw you here," she said, with a quick gesture of slim fingers. Excitement was eager in her eyes as she added, "I was so glad that at last there is somebody else."

"You mean that you and I are the only people on the island?" Garrison cried. "That you've been here alone?"

Myrrha nodded. "Yes, except for the Sleeper, of course."

"The Sleeper?" Garrison could not com-

prehend her. He cried, "How long have you been on the island?"

"Ever since I can remember, of course," she said, looking at him wonderingly.

"But how did you get here?" he exclaimed.

"I don't understand you," Myrrha said perplexedly. "I have been here from the first. I am part of the dream, the same as you and everything else here."

"Part of the dream?" Garrison echoed. "What in the wide world do you mean by that?"

MYRRHA'S puzzlement increased. She looked at him with astonished wonder in her clear eyes.

"You mean, you don't understand it?" she asked. "Why, that is strange—I understood it all from the first. Though I don't know just *how* I did——"

"Will you quit talking riddles and explain?" Garrison demanded. Then he saw the hurt in her child-like eyes and awkwardly tempered his speech. "I'm sorry. I'm just excited, impatient. What did you mean by saying you were part of the dream?"

Her answer stunned him.

"Everything here is just a dream," Myrrha said, with the eager quickness of a child trying to explain something. "This island is really just barren rock, and the forest and animals and you and I are only a dream. They all seem real to us, of course, since we too are part of the dream."

"Why—you're crazy!" Garrison exploded. "This forest—the animals—you—a dream? And I, too?"

"Of course," Myrrha said earnestly. "You are part of the dream, the same as I am."

Garrison repressed a strong desire to swear. Then he felt pity for the girl. She believed what she was saying, he saw. She must, he thought, have grown up here alone, and somehow evolved this wild theory.

"Whose dream is it we're part of, Myrrha?" he asked, humoring her. "Who dreamt us?"

"The Sleeper, of course," she said instantly.

Garrison felt a strong desire to laugh. This was, surely, the most insane adventure he had ever had.

"And who is the Sleeper?" he asked.

Myrrha's soft face sobered with a touch of awe. "He is just—the Sleeper. He lies in the depths of the forest, sleeping, never waking. And whatever he dreams has reality on this island. The Sleeper dreamed the forests and brooks you see around you. He dreamed the animals, and the birds. He dreamed *me*—and I was suddenly here. Since I have been here, he has dreamed many other animals, but no other people until you. I am glad he dreamed you. I was lonely!"

And Myrrha's dark eyes broke into a dancing smile of pleasure. Her soft, bare arm hooked through Garrison's with confident affection.

"So the Sleeper dreamed me, did he?" Garrison said amusedly. "I'd like to see this Sleeper."

The awe came back on Myrrha's face and she answered slowly.

"I can take you to see him. But you must promise not to go near him."

And quite simply, she started to lead the way off the beach into the woods, following an invisible trail of her own that led deviously toward the center of the forested island.

Parrots and monkeys scolded them as they trod the green turf between aisles of giant, flower-decked trees. The soft wind swept them with spicy, perfumed breath. In the air hummed a myriad of gorgeous insects.

Myrrha was like a gay little wood-nymph at his side, laughing up at the scolding birds, plucking a great blue bloom from a vine to thrust in her black hair, dancing along on little bare white feet. But once she held Garrison suddenly back, and he saw the dangerously beautiful shape of a leopard fade into the foliage ahead.

"I could wish that the Sleeper hadn't dreamed *them*," Garrison said dryly.

"Those are only his bad dreams," Myrrha said earnestly. "He has dreamed many beautiful things here, but sometimes he dreams too of evil things."

"Logical enough," Garrison laughed. "How did you figure all that out?"

Myrrha smiled back as she shook her head. "I don't know. It was in my mind, somehow, when the Sleeper dreamed me."

They had threaded through more than a mile of the faery forest, and now entered a long glade of tall, tremendous trees, a natural cathedral of green gloom and hushed silence.

Myrrha pressed against Garrison a little timidly as they went on.

"We are near the Sleeper," she whispered. "Make no loud sound. All life on the island fears to go near him, and even I—I am afraid."

CURIOSITY stirred in Garrison as they went forward. Then as they stopped in a moment, sharp wonder replaced it.

They stood at the edge of a perfectly circular clear space in the hushed green glade. Grass covered it like an emerald carpet. Out there in the center of the circle, in the sunlight there was inset in the grass a low, square dais of dazzling crystal.

On the crystal dais stood a low copper couch, with strangely carved sides. And on the couch, wrapped in a robe of golden cloth ornamented with black figures, lay the motionless figure of a man.

He lay quite unmoving, upon his side, one bare arm flung across his down-turned head. As Garrison went closer, Myrrha fearfully trying to keep him back, he saw that the man's hair was dark, his skin white. Nothing else could be seen, shrouded as he was in the golden robe.

"The Sleeper," whispered Myrrha. She had halted him with plucking fingers, a dozen feet from the crystal dais. Her dark eyes were wide with awe as she stared at the recumbent figure.

"Good Lord, this must be a corpse laid here for burial by some unknown race, long ago!" Garrison exclaimed. "But how it has been preserved perfectly for so long, lying here in the open——"

"No, he is not dead, only sleeping," murmured Myrrha. "Speak not so loudly, lest you awaken him."

"I'm going to examine that body," Garrison muttered with intense interest, starting forward.

But Myrrha held him, clinging frantically, her face chalk-white with terror.

"No, you must not! If you awaken the Sleeper, his dream will end—we and everything else he has dreamed into being on the island will perish!"

"Nonsense," he said, but she held to him.

"Remember, you promised you would not go near him!"

There was frantic horror and heartbreak in her voice.

Garrison softened at sight of the girl's terrified emotion.

"All right," he told her. "I'll let him alone."

Myrrha drew him fearfully back out of the sunlit clearing into the glade. She led hastily back the way they had come, looking apprehensively behind her.

"Had you awakened him, you would have destroyed us all," she told him, a catch in her voice. "That is why all the animals, even, do not go near the Sleeper—somehow they sense that."

Garrison felt he understood all this. There must once have been a civilized race on this unknown island, one that had embalmed the dead man so perfectly that he had lain indefinitely on his copper couch, unchanged. The animals, fearing the dead, would avoid him.

And it was natural that Myrrha, growing up alone on the island, would think the corpse a sleeper and evolve her weird belief that everything on the island was the Sleeper's dream. For Garrison had no doubt now that Myrrha was a castaway like himself, grown up here from childhood.

She was happy now with child-like relief as they left the glade of the Sleeper behind them.

"I take you now to my home, Gair'son," she said, trying to repeat his name as he had told it to her.

Garrison looked back thoughtfully and said, "I'd like to have a closer look at that body sometime."

Instantly the panic flashed back on Myrrha's face. She clung to him, desperate entreaty in her eyes.

"Gair'son, you must never touch the Sleeper! It is as I said—if he ever awakes,

we who are only his dream will meet our end. Promise me you'll never touch him!"

He could feel her heart hammer with terror. "All right, Myrrha," he said soothingly. "I promise not to touch him."

THEY came soon to Myrrha's home. It was on a wooded slope at the north end of the island, amid great trees. A foaming little stream rushed down there, and right beside it snuggled a dainty bower of twisted green withes, thatched with velvety moss.

Myrrha showed him how she had made a door of boughs that could be closed at night against the animals. And she showed him fruit and nuts she had collected for food, and the soft couch she had made of fragrant ferns.

"It will not be lonely now, with you here, Gair'son," she said fondly.

"But I can't live in this too," he objected.

"Why not?" Myrrha asked, clear eyes puzzled. "It is big enough for both of us."

Garrison tried awkwardly to explain.

Her eyes filled with tears and her soft mouth quivered. "You do not like me, Gair'son."

Hastily, he tried to soothe her. And as he held her, he was suddenly conscious of the appeal of her soft beauty, of her rounded ivory body and graceful limbs that the scanty tunic scarcely concealed, of the pure forehead and wide, hurt dark eyes beneath her silky black hair.

"Myrrha," he muttered.

And somehow then he was holding her tighter, fragrant red lips against his own hungry ones, silkiest of perfumed black hair against his hand. "Myrrha—Myrrha——"

So began Garrison's life with Myrrha on the island. It was a fantastic life, and yet it was more real to him in the next few days than all his past life in the busy, bustling world.

It was Myrrha who made it so warmly real for him. It seemed to him that he had never known what love was until he met this girl, so child-like in her utter simplicity of mind, so wonderfully womanly in her soft loveliness and devotion to him.

He wondered much how Myrrha had come to the island, how she had survived and grown here. And she was able to tell him but little. Her notions of time were vague. She had been on the island just as now, she said, ever since the Sleeper dreamed her.

And when Myrrha talked so earnestly of the Sleeper, Garrison would smile and draw her fondly closer. He made no more attempts to disillusion her of her belief, for he saw that nothing could shake her queer faith. But Garrison wondered much about that lifeless form on the copper couch.

ON THE third morning, Garrison and Myrrha went down the wooded slope from the bower—and stopped in surprise. A small lake had appeared at the foot of the hill—a blue, shining little lake that had not been there the night before.

Myrrha clapped her hands in glee. "Gair'son, look! The Sleeper has dreamed a lake!"

"You think the Sleeper dreamed this lake, too?" Garrison said, though he was himself surprised.

"Of course," she said confidently.

He laughed. "Something happened to dam up that little stream during the night—that's what did it."

"It is not so," Myrrha asserted. "It was the Sleeper's dream."

" 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on,' " quoted Garrison, smiling. "No matter how it came here, it looks like a good place to swim. Come on!"

But in the next few days, there were things that Garrison found harder to explain than the lake.

There were the elephants, for instance. Garrison saw them one afternoon, two huge, humped gray shapes pushing ponderously through the distant forest. He stood rooted in amazement.

"Why didn't you tell me there were elephants on the island?" Garrison exclaimed to the girl.

Myrrha shook her head. "There never were any until now, Gair'son. The Sleeper must have just dreamed them."

"Rubbish," he said impatiently. "They've been here—you just didn't happen to see them before."

Yet he had inward doubts. He and

Myrrha had been over all the island in the last few days, and had seen no elephants or tracks of any. Yet the great beasts were here now, beyond doubt.

It was the same with the giant, three-foot blue butterflies he saw the next day, and the seals that appeared in the lake a day later. They had not been there before—they were there now. And Myrrha said quite simply the Sleeper had dreamed them too.

"Sleeper, my eye!" Garrison said impatiently. He told her, "I'm going and look at that body again."

"You will not go too near the Sleeper—will not touch him?" Myrrha pleaded anxiously. "Remember, you promised me——"

"I'll keep my promise," he reassured her.

"I will go with you," Myrrha declared.

"Don't quite trust me, eh?" he smiled.

"It is not that, Gair'son," she said earnestly. "But we have been so happy—I fear lest something you do might awake the Sleeper, and bring an end to us and everything else here."

This time his arm was about her waist as they went through the forest, and into that hushed and solemn glade of green gloom where no life seemed ever to venture. And he could feel her heart pounding as they came to that silent, circular space of sunlight.

In its center still dazzled the crystal dais, and upon it still stood the copper couch on which rested the body of the Sleeper. He lay as before, wrapped in the shrouding golden robe, one arm across his downturned head.

"A miracle of preservation, that body," Garrison muttered, staring. "Archeologists would go crazy to examine——"

He stopped, for Myrrha had shuddered wildly beside him. The girl gasped, "Look—the Sleeper stirs, and sighs!"

For a moment, Garrison almost thought he *did* see a faint movement of the body under the golden shroud, almost thought he heard a low, singing groan. Then he dismissed the fantastic idea.

"It was just the wind sighing, and stirring the robe, Myrrha," he said. But her face was aghast with fear.

"Gair'son, let us leave here, quickly! The Sleeper is having bad dreams—and that means evil on the island!"

As she led him frantically back through the glade, the girl was quivering with terror.

"I am afraid, Gair'son! The Sleeper groaned and that means his dream was evil."

He held her trembling softness close to him. "Don't be afraid, Myrrha."

But that night, fear came to Garrison himself, for there came—the beast-men. He awoke in the little bower, Myrrha still sleeping in his arms, and heard strange, heavy footsteps outside, snuffling grunts, a clumsy clawing at the door.

Then the rude door was torn open, and against the starlit sky he saw the dark silhouettes of the creatures outside. Hunched, huge, hairy shapes of men nearer the animal than the human, with bowed, gorilla-like limbs and bestial snouted faces out of which green eyes blazed through the darkness at the frozen Garrison.

"The things of evil that the Sleeper dreamed!" screamed Myrrha, awakening at that moment.

THE bestial figures started to enter, unloosing a babel of chattering and grunting as they heard the girl's voice. Their hairy hands reached in the dark—and then Garrison broke from the trance that had held him, and went mad with terror and loathing.

He smashed wild blows against the hairy bodies, yelling his horror. The creatures recoiled out of the dark hut, running swiftly back on hunched legs into the trees.

"Myrrha, we've got to get out of here before they come back!" Garrison cried unsteadily. "Come on!"

He was half-carrying her as he plunged out of the bower, and ran into the dark forest. In a moment they heard the raging, chattering uproar of the beast-men, tearing the bower apart.

Garrison's horror-clouded mind recovered itself only minutes later. His frantic flight had brought Myrrha and him into a dark thicket of tall bushes.

"Gair'son, *they* are what the Sleeper dreamed today as we watched!" cried

Myrrha, shuddering wildly. "I knew his dreams were evil."

"Listen!" Garrison suddenly exclaimed. And they both heard an angry, chattering uproar drawing closer in the forest.

"God, they're trailing us!" cried Garrison, aghast. "They want—they want *you*, Myrrha."

He wrenched a great branch from a tree, and with the rude club in his hand, stumbled blindly on through the woods with Myrrha. And after them, veering to follow them, came the pursuit.

Hour after hour they dodged and fled through the nighted forest, and always the chattering, unclean horde pursued. The paling dawn found them at the southern end of the island, Myrrha exhausted and clinging pitiably to him.

"We can't run from them forever," Garrison said hoarsely. "Sooner or later, they'll catch up to us."

Then sudden hope lit his haggard face. "Maybe they wouldn't follow us to that clearing where the Sleeper lies! None of the animals on the island ever go there."

"No, let us not go there!" Myrrha cried.

But he overrode her protests, stumbled desperately with her through the woods to the hushed, solemn glade that lay silent as ever in the rising sun.

He carried the fainting girl to within a dozen feet of the crystal dais. On his couch, the Sleeper's dark, down-turned head was still immobile under his upflung arm and golden robe.

"I am afraid," Myrrha whispered, looking fearfully at the motionless form.

"We're safe here, I think," Garrison panted. "They won't follow——"

"*Gair'son!*"

Out of the glade into the clearing had burst the unclean, hairy horde—the beast-men!

Myrrha's scream catapulted Garrison fiercely forward to meet them, to hold them from her. His heavy club swung in raging blows that crushed the skulls of two of the creatures like eggshells.

But the others came at him, with shrill yells of animal rage, bestial, snouting faces slavering their rage, reaching for him with incredibly powerful hands. He slammed the club wildly against their faces, crushing bone and muscle. Then Myrrha screamed again.

Garrison turned for a split second, and cried out hoarsely. Three of the beast-men had left the attack on him, had circled past him and had seized the girl. Ivory body struggling in the grip of hairy arms—Garrison's blood froze at the sight. And before he could turn back, hands gripped him, too.

"Myrrha!" he cried madly, struggling to smash aside his own attackers, to reach her side.

He glimpsed her white face, her horror-dilated eyes. He heard her frantic cry.

"Gair'son—wake the Sleeper! It's better for us all, for everything here to perish, than for us to die like this——"

He couldn't reach her. The clawing, hairy hands held him back, would have him down in a moment.

"Wake the Sleeper, Gair'son! End everything——"

The beast-men had him to his knees, by

now. His red-lit, tortured soul knew that there was no hope of saving Myrrha, no hope except the wild one that her cry had voiced. If he woke the Sleeper—if that did end Myrrha, everything—better for her to end that way.

Garrison made a last effort against the clutching, tearing claws. He swung his club wildly around his head, and threw it straight at the motionless form on the copper couch. He saw the club strike the Sleeper's bare shoulder, saw blood flow from the bruising wound. And then he glimpsed the Sleeper stirring wildly, starting up to a sitting position. . . .

A sudden mistiness came over everything. The trees, the grass, the dais and couch, Myrrha's white body and the hairy beast-men—all seemed suddenly fading, vanishing. And Garrison was aware that his own body, too, was vanishing, fading.

Through dimming sight, as his own body disappeared, he saw the Sleeper sitting up, opening his eyes. And in the final moment before his body vanished, before everything vanished, Garrison saw and recognized the Sleeper's face.

It was his own face! He, Garrison, was vanishing like everything else—but the Sleeper was Garrison, too, and the Sleeper had awakened.

With that incredible realization, his consciousness whirled into darkness. And then instantly he was conscious again. And he found himself sitting stiffly and alone in the sunlight, Myrrha and the beast-men and all else gone. He, the Sleeper, had awakened.

Wildly, Garrison stared. He had been lying on bare rock, and around him stretched a lifeless, barren island of rock without one spot of life, one speck of green. And Garrison sobbed aloud as he realized.

He, who had stumbled ashore and fallen into exhausted slumber here, had been the Sleeper. And his dream had created the forest and animals and Myrrha, and had even created a dream-Garrison like himself who had lived and loved in this domain of dream. And when he had awakened, the dream had failed and vanished.

Something made him turn his sagging head to the sea. The black speck of a ship was out there, heading for the island. . . .

THE captain of the tanker left sympathetic toward this castaway he had rescued, and who lay now in the berth of his lamplit cabin. He felt glad that his search for survivors of the *Mary D.*, that he had begun on receiving the doomed freighter's interrupted distress call, had saved at least this one man. But the gray-haired seaman's kindly face was troubled, now, and he spoke reluctantly.

"I don't doubt you had a wild dream of some kind," he said. "Lying delirious on that rocky island—who wouldn't?"

"It wasn't just a delirious dream—this dream was a *reality!*" Garrison cried. "Those things I dreamed, the forest and beasts and the girl and the other me—they all had real existence, somehow, as long as I lay dreaming them."

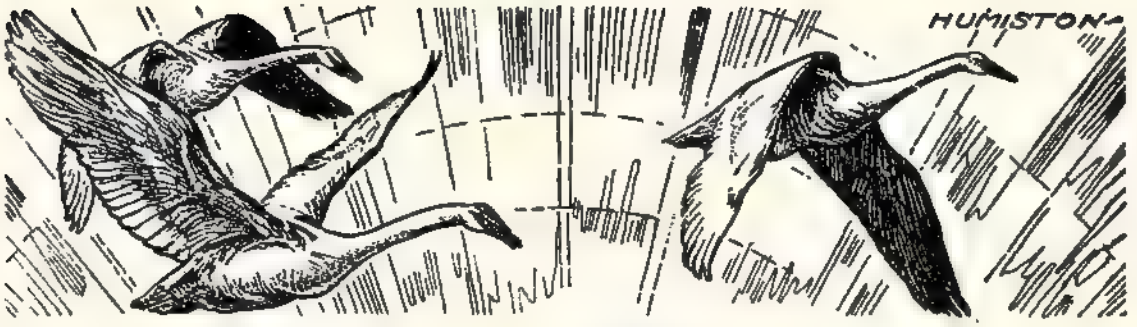
"Oh, come now," the captain told him. "You're too intelligent to believe that."

"I do believe it, though," Garrison said. And his eyes glimmered with tears. "I believe that I met the only girl I'll ever love in a dream that was real and solid while it lasted.

"How was the dream made real? I don't know—I don't know. Maybe some queer force impregnating that island, attuned to the mental force of the subconscious mind. Whatever caused it, I know that it all *was* real. I know—by this."

And he rolled up his sleeve, baring his shoulder. There was a fresh, angry wound on it.

"That is the wound the other Garrison, the dream Garrison, made in the Sleeper's shoulder when he threw the club. I didn't have that wound when I fell asleep on the island. I had it when I awoke."



Swan Maiden

by LEAH BODINE DRAKE

WHAT more, what more can I do, O wild swan's daughter,
To magic away your memories of storm-gray skies?
Of lakes like agates shining where tall pines rise
And the sound in your ears of wild white wings beating above black water?

Under a holy thorn lies your robe of feathers
That I buried deep when the moon pressed a goblin chin
On the Old Hill's shoulder. There I bound in it
With seven spells to guard against the lure of wild swan-weathers.

But can one be content beside the drowsy fire
Who has felt the Polar Lights aflame on her wings?
Does the cloak you wear of sables caught in my springs
Feel as soft to the touch as the plumes of your old desire?

You smile as you take my gifts in your thin, webbed fingers
That are yet so deft at the distaff and the loom;
And when you press my lips in the curtained room
I dare to hope that no wild dream yet lingers,

Behind your wide black eyes, of that strange sky-faring.
I say: She is well content with her mortal life,—
The white swan-maid is lost in the human wife
Who sings as she goes about her calm house-caring.

But ever in Spring returns the wild swan's daughter . . .
At night by my side I feel you move and sigh,
As the veils of sleep are torn by a haunting cry
And the sound of great white wings in the dark, rushing above black water!

The Keeper of the Key

I

The most merciful thing in the world is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far.

H. P. Lovecraft

THERE is so little time to set down what I must write,* to leave this record of the strange events which began in London not so very long ago, so

*The manuscript of Nayland Colum, discovered by Captain Robertson of the *Sana*, in a bottle in Colum's cabin, is preserved in the British Museum; hitherto, publication has been denied, but since certain aspects of the manuscript appear to have bearing on recent events in the South Pacific, the manuscript has been released for publication.

By August Derleth

. . . seeking the place of concealment where Cthulhu lies waiting to spread his spawn over the earth and perhaps its sister planets

little time because even now the sea and the wind rage around the ship, and we are delivered to *him* because we are in *his* element—if indeed what I fear is true. I have held and the professor has said that there is no *knowing*, but what after all is truth and what is legend, and which parts of the one rightfully belong to the other?

There are legends which are older than man. How then, did we come by them, if there were not some intelligence apart from man's to bring them down? Man has modified them, changed them, fitted them into his own pattern. But the ancient writings remain, the age-old legends of the human race, the tales, vague and unconnected though they may be, of vast, cataclysmic events, of weird and terrible forces—and beings.

It began, as I have written, only several

weeks ago in London, though time seems longer than that, so crowded with events was the interval between. My outré novel, *The Watchers on the Other Side,* had not long been published, but it had already achieved that kind of minor success which can come to a novel which is not quite socially-aware enough to be called serious and yet not wholly light enough to be classified as mere entertainment; critics had acclaimed it, book-reviewers had helped it along with mild praise, and the public, sated with the ordinary run of mysteries and puzzle novels, had taken it to their hearts with enthusiasm. I was, in fact, preparing to move from my comparatively humble flat in Soho, when, late one night, I was aroused from my desk, at which I was laboriously trying to piece together a second novel in the same vein, by a cautious knock on my door.

I rose, somewhat tiredly, and opened it to an elderly gentleman whose aspect was kind without being benign, and yet also grim without being menacing. His hair was long and white, but his face was clean-shaven; his nose was strongly Roman, his chin almost prognathous. His eyes I could not see, for he wore dark glasses with shields at the sides, thus completely concealing his eyes. Above his glasses, his brows were unruly and graying.

His voice, when he spoke, was cultured. "I am Professor Laban Shrewsbury, and I am looking for the author of *The Watchers on the Other Side.*"

I stepped aside and said, "Come in, please."

"Thank you, Mr. Colum."

HE CAME into my cluttered flat, seated himself, and without preamble, made himself comfortable by throwing back his cape-like coat, exposing a rather old-fashioned high collar and a flowing tie, and, folding his hands about the head of his cane, he began to speak.

"I should perhaps have written to ask whether I might call on you, Mr. Colum, but time is so short, and it occurred to me that the author of a book like yours would be adventurous enough by nature to understand. Do you mind if I ask you certain questions? Forgive me; I have already observed that you are at work on a new novel, meant to be a successor to *The Watchers on the Other Side;* and that it is not going well, I can guess. But it is just possible that I may be of some slight assistance to you in this regard—though not before some time has elapsed. But I should like now, if you do not object, to ask you a question or two about *The Watchers on the Other Side.*"

"By all means," I said, curiously impressed by my visitor.

"Tell me, did you write that novel out of imagination alone?"

The question was perhaps a natural one. I smiled. "You are paying tribute to my poor skill," I said. "But, of course the answer is no. I drew upon the ancient legends as much as possible."

"And struck upon the kernel of truth?"

"In legends, Professor?" My smile held, even at the risk of giving offense to him.

"Every legend, all lore, has at basis some truth, however distorted it may be in the process of being handed down from one generation to the next. And there are those strange and provocative parallels in the legends of various peoples. You will have encountered them. But no matter. Tell me one other thing—have you always, since publication of your novel, felt entirely secure as to your person?"

"Of course!" I answered without hesitation, but an afterthought stirred me; there had been evenings——

"I think not," said my visitor with compelling self-confidence. "On several occasions you have been followed—or should I say 'stalked'—by stealthy habitants of a world of which you never dreamed save in the fiction which flowed from your pen by such coincidence. You see, I know, Mr. Colum, because on two of those occasions I myself followed your followers. A pity you could not have seen them! You would not have been able to recall their like, and you would not have forgotten the disturbing batrachian aspects of their features and bodies."

I stared at him in amazement. I *had* had the distinct impression that I was being followed on considerably more than one

occasion. I had sought to dismiss it as the figment of my over-active imagination, but failed; so I had concluded at last that my followers were from among the dregs of Soho or Wapping or Limehouse, and this, in turn, had inspired my determination to leave Soho behind.

Quite as if he read my thoughts, my visitor said, "But they would follow you wherever you went, Mr. Colum. I know."

Strangely, I had the inexplicable conviction that he *did* know, that perhaps he alone might provide me with a means of escape.

"I know you are adventurous," he went on. "I know you are possessed of more than ordinary courage. I have some knowledge of your exploits on two exploring expeditions in which you took part. I do not, therefore, come unprepared. But, admittedly, these exploits and your adventurous nature are not sufficient to interest me of themselves; no, but in combination with the fact that it was you, Nayland Colum, who wrote *The Watchers on the Other Side,* these facts are important to my purpose. In a very modest sense, I, too, am an explorer—but my explorations are not of the more mundane kind. I am not concerned with the mysterious and hidden places of the earth except only superficially and insofar as they are connected to the areas outside in which my real interest lies. But there is hidden somewhere on this earth a place I must find, and I have only now settled upon a clue to the keeper of the key to this place."

"In what region is it?" I asked.

"Could I be certain, I would not need to seek it. It might be in the Andes, it might be in the South Pacific, it might be in Tibet or Mongolia, it might be in Egypt or the deserts of Arabia. It might even be in London. But let me tell you for what I am seeking—it is the place of concealment where Cthulhu lies waiting to rise again and spread his spawn over the earth and perhaps its sister planets."

"But Cthulhu is a legend—a creation of the imagination of the American writer, Lovecraft!" I protested.

"You say so. So do others. But consider the parallels which exist—the representations of godlike beings of evil which are so strangely similar in the creative life of the natives of Polynesia and the Incas of Peru, the ancient inhabitants of the Tigris-Euphrates valley, and the Aztecs of Mexico—there is no need to go on. No, do not interrupt me."

HE WENT on to speak of legends and ancient lore with a grimly forbidding earnestness and a persuasiveness which aroused first, my doubts about their unreality, and at last my unwilling belief. He spoke of certain evil cults which had come down from pre-human eons, surviving in strange, out-of-the-way places, servants of the Ancient Ones—almost inconceivable beings of dread who had fought against the Elder Gods in their far place among the stars of Orion and Taurus, and had been expelled to alien stars and planets—great Cthulhu, waiting in sleep within some fastness which might be the sunken sea king-

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dom of R'lyeh; Hastur the Unspeakable, come from the lake of Hali in the Hyades; Nyarlathotep, the fearful messenger of the Ancient Ones; Shub-Niggurath, the Goat With a Thousand Young, symbol of fertility; Ithaqua, ruler of the air, akin to the fabled Wendigo, Yog-Sothoth, the All-in-One and One-in-All, not subject to strictures of time or space, who was greater than all the other Ancient Ones—all dreaming in hidden places of the time when they can rise again against the Elder Gods and once more rule and command Earth and the sister planets and stars of the universe of which Earth is but an infinitesimal part. He spoke of the servants of the Ancient Ones—of the Deep Ones, the Voormis, the Abominable Mi-Go, the Shoggoths, the Shantaks; of the mysteriously unmapped lands as N'Kai Kadath-in-the-Cold-Waste, Carcosa and Y'hanthlei; of the rivalry between Cthulhu and Hastur and their followers.

AND yet, somehow, I sensed that he withheld more knowledge than he imparted. I listened in growing wonder, increasingly aware that there was about my visitor a strangely disquieting aspect which was evident even above the almost hypnotic compulsion of his voice and manner, the conviction his bearing and his words conveyed, an intuitively perceived force which lent weight and authority to his quiet recital.

I listened, listened without interruption while he mentioned the old books and mouldering papers which contained the clues to the reality behind the legends—the *Pnakotic Manuscripts,* the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of Von Junzt, the Comte d'Erlette's *Cultes des Ghoules,* the *R'lyeh Text,* and finally the fabulously rare *Necromonicon* of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred.

He had been speaking of these hidden things, drawing upon some arcana of knowledge which was obviously his own because of an impressive amount of research, for some time, when abruptly he cut himself off in the middle of a sentence. He sat motionless, in an attitude of intent listening.

"Ah," he breathed quietly. Then he rose and took the liberty of putting out the light.

"Do you hear, Mr. Colum?"

I strained to listen in the pregnant darkness. Was it my imagination, or did I hear a curious, shuffling sound, almost an uncertain hopping, moving out of the hall beyond my flat and down the steps?

"They have followed me here," said Professor Shrewsbury. "Come."

He moved to a window overlooking the entrance to the building. I came to his side and together we looked down. Out of the building came not one but two strangely hunched figures, who seemed to shuffle and hop along, and, passing under a misty light in the street, revealed oddly repellant features, ichthyic, if I were to judge.

"If I were to say to you," whispered Professor Shrewsbury at my side, "that there went two of the Deep Ones, would you still believe that I was the victim of my own wishful imagination, Mr. Colum?"

"I don't know," I answered, likewise in a whisper.

But I knew that what walked away into a London fog below was something incredibly evil; the aura of it seemed even now to linger in the street.

"How did you know they were here?" I asked suddenly.

"I knew it as well as I know this book"—he picked up a book from my desk, despite the darkness, "or this page of manuscript"—this, too, he picked up, "or this pen. And even now, we have not been deserted, Mr. Colum, by no means. They have no intention of leaving us to our own devices. Perhaps they suspect my purpose, I do not know."

"And what is your purpose?" I managed to ask, somewhat surprised at his uncanny vision in the darkness of an unfamiliar room.

"I need someone like you to accompany me in a search for the Keeper of the Key. I warn you that the course will be fraught with dangers, not only to the body, but to your very soul—that the instructions you will receive are bound to seem mad to you, but yet must be followed to the letter, without question—that we may very well not return."

I hesitated. His challenge was direct and

uncompromising. I did not for a moment doubt his sincerity or integrity. Where would he lead me? I wondered.

"We are bound for the port of Aden, Mr. Colum," he said. "But perhaps you would like some further evidence of my ability to see and foresee the dangers which beset us. Pray do not be alarmed, Mr. Colum; my powers are small at best, and yet they may be surprising." He put on the light, and, turning to me, took off his black spectacles.

My shock bordered momentarily on hysteria. The strangled cry that escaped me was lost in a terrified silence, while I fought for self-control. *For Professor Laban Shrewsbury, despite having given me so convincing a demonstration of the excellence of his vision, had no eyes at all; where his eyes should have been there were only the dark pits of his empty sockets!*

Quite calmly, he resumed his spectacles. "I am sorry to have disturbed your equanimity, Mr. Colum," he said quietly. "But you have not yet given me your answer."

I tried to match his calmness with my own. "I will go, Professor Shrewsbury."

"I was certain you would," he answered. "Now listen carefully—as soon as day breaks, you must undertake to secure your possessions against a long absence. We shall take every precaution against loss, but it is quite probable that you will not return for some time—months, perhaps a year, perhaps more. Does that upset you?"

"No," I replied, truthfully enough.

"Very good. We shall set out in two days from Southampton. Can you be ready in that time?"

"I believe so."

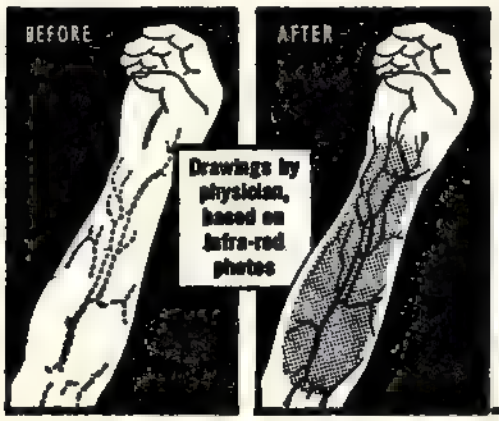
"Now I must tell you we have strange allies in our quest, Mr. Colum, and even stranger properties in combat." As he spoke, he took from his pocket a little phial of golden mead, which he pressed upon me. "Guard this carefully, for it has the property, taken in the smallest quantity, of extending the range of all your senses and of enabling your astral self to move about independently in your sleep." Next he gave me a small, five-pointed star, which he identified as a kind of amulet which would assure my protection, as long as I carried it on my person, from all such beings as the Deep Ones, though it was powerless against the Ancient Ones themselves.

He went on to add a little stone whistle to the curious things he had already bestowed upon me.

"In many ways, Mr. Colum, this whistle is your most potent weapon. When the time comes that you are in mortal danger, without other escape, if you will take a little of the mead, keep the star-stone in your possession, and blow this whistle, calling forth immediately thereafter these words—*'Iā! Iā! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!'* the Byakhee birds will come and transport you to a place of safety."

"If the minions of the Ancient Ones are everywhere, what haven is left?" I asked.

"There is one, where we can be safe. And yet we are not there; we are on Celaeno." He smiled tolerantly at my incredulous astonishment. "I do not blame you for thinking me deranged, Mr. Colum. I assure



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you most solemnly that what I say is the literal truth; Hastur and his minions are not subject to the same laws of time and space which bind us. Their summoning formula is heard, believe me, wherever you may be —and answered."

He paused reflectively and studied my face. "Do you now wish to withdraw, Mr. Colum?"

I shook my head slowly, fascinated against all reason, against my will, against my judgment.

"Can you meet me at Southampton the day after tomorrow? Our ship is the *Princess Ellen;* we will set out at nine in the morning."

"I'll be there," I said.

"A sum of money will be deposited to your account before I leave London, Mr. Colum. You will find it sufficient. Pray go on board the *Princess Ellen* even if I am not there; I will join you in good time, and do not be alarmed at my failure to appear, should the hour seem late. Reservations have been made." He hesitated. "And let me impress upon you once more the danger which attends you; believe me, it is never far from you—*they* know, since your book has come out, that you are dangerous to them or may become so."

So saying, he took his departure, and I was left alone with the confusion of my thoughts and the conviction that I stood on the threshold of an adventure stranger than any ever conceived by the mind of man.

II

THE utter monotony of the prosaic world of every day seldom impresses itself upon one until the establishment of a sharp contrast affords a comparative basis. There is, too, the very real danger that one may see and understand that the patina of the mundane which overlays all things is but a mask for the constant struggle which goes on unceasingly between recognizable forces of good and the nebulous, almost incredible evil which lies forever in wait just beyond the rim of awareness, lying in wait not only for the soul of man, but for the world itself, the world and possession of its lands and seas and, beyond that, of the star-spaces and all that lies in the cosmos.

I lay for a long time that night contemplating the thing Professor Laban Shrewsbury had said to me, and the even more appalling things at which he had but hinted. The deep hours of night lend themselves well to the eerie, the enchanting, the terrible, but the core of reason, the solid substructure of all the practical knowledge which a man takes in for his first thirty years is not easily set aside by any fund of new and conflicting knowledge. My visitor had been virtually, little more than a creature of the night; however persuasive his story, I knew nothing of him, though I held in my possession the curious things he had given me.

There were, however, certain avenues of information. My old friend, Henry Pilgore, possessed one of the most comprehensive of reference libraries. Depite the lateness of the hour, I telephoned him, putting in a trunk call to the Somerset village where he lived. He bade me to hang on while he sought out such information as he might have; but I did not have to wait long. Professor Shrewsbury was listed; Pilgore read his biographical sketch—of his home in Arkham, Massachusetts; of his one-time connection with Miskatonic University; of his erratic, post-teaching existence; of his apparently wide travels; of his scholarly work, *An Investigation into the Myth-Patterns of Latter-day Primitives with Especial Reference to the R'lyeh Text;* and finally: "He disappeared in September, 1938. Presumed dead."

Presumed dead. The words rang in my thoughts for a long moment. But I could not doubt that, whatever he might be, my visitor had most assuredly been Professor Laban Shrewsbury. What of the things he had left for me? The mead, he had said, had strange properties.

I opened the phial cautiously, touched a drop of it to my finger, and tasted it. It was flat to sweet, ambrosial on second taste, but it gave me no sensation at all, not even one akin to the mild stimulation of weak wine. Disappointed, I replaced the phial, and sat down once more in the darkness of my room. Far away, Big Ben struck two o'clock

in the morning; I had but one more day in London, scarcely that, if I meant to be at Southampton docks by nine o'clock of the day following. But now doubts began to assail me; I began to doubt the wisdom of my decision; I began to consider my commitment folly——

AND then I became aware of a subtle alteration in my sensory experience. I was slowly becoming cognizant of a greatly heightened perception on all planes; sounds common to the street outside were clearly heard and accurately interpreted; the smells, the odors and perfumes of the night infiltrating my quarters were made vastly stronger; but at the same time I experienced an even more significant quality of the mead of which I had partaken—my intuitive perception was increased beyond the bounds of what I might have considered possible, increased to such an extent that I became keenly aware of the hidden watchers posted not only in the building, but in the street, and even hundreds of yards away.

For they were there. I cannot say by what marvelous property of the mead I was enabled to see as clearly as if they stood before me the evilly batrachian and ichthyic features of those oddly repellent creatures in the guise of men; but see them I did. And I knew at that moment that everything my visitor had told me was true beyond question, no matter how fantastic his words had sounded. And this realization was fraught with the coldest and most soul-shaking terror, for the limitless vistas of ancient and potent horror, the alien concepts, the monstrous beings which were implicit in the hidden word of Professor Shrewsbury's revelation were paralyzing to mankind.

What happened then is incapable of any logical or scientific explanation.

I passed over into a sleeping state during which I had a most vivid dream, in which I saw myself packing my belongings for the impending voyage, writing a letter to my publisher to explain that I would be away from London for several months, instructing my brother by letter also to handle such affairs of mine as needed care during my absence, and finally slipping away from my quarters in a patent and successful effort to elude my followers. Furthermore, I made my way speedily to Waterloo Station, once I had complied with the formalities incidental to traveling abroad, and entrained for Southampton, where I presently found myself at the docks and on board the *Princess Ellen,* though not without a further frightening shock at the realization that, though I had eluded my London pursuers, I had other, similar watchers following me in Southampton.

Now all this, I say, was a dream of the most vivid sort, wholly unlike any dream which I had ever previously experienced. It was so real, in fact, that it seemed to me that the figure in the chair was the dream, and the dream the reality. Or could both have been? I remembered later Professor Shrewsbury's comment about the strange properties of the golden mead, which was certainly, I am now convinced, no invention of man's, properties never conceived by mankind but brought from some far place, even perhaps, from out of this world, from the hidden places in the cosmos where the Ancient Ones still lurk, waiting forever to return to the paradise from which they were cast out eons ago.

FOR I woke up not in my familiar Soho quarters, but in my cabin on board the *Princess Ellen,* with Professor Shrewsbury beside me. By what outré powers he possessed behind his formidable black spectacles, he divined the reason for my amazement.

"I see you have sampled the mead, Mr. Colum," he said quietly. He was not angry. "You will then have some appreciation of its properties."

"It was not a dream then?"

He shook his head. "Whatever it was you dreamed was quite true. The mead enabled part of you to separate from its counterpart; you were thus empowered to see yourself doing what you must do in order to fulfil your commitment. Perhaps it was as well that you did try the mead; it gave you the means to understand how closely, indeed, you were being watched and followed, and it lent you furthermore the wit to elude

your pursuers. But we shall not be long without pursuit, you may be sure of that."

He waited until I had collected myself somewhat, adjusting to the situation in which I so surprisingly now found myself. Then he continued.

"We are bound for the port of Aden in Arabia, as I told you two nights ago. From Aden we will strike inward either toward the site of ancient Timna, which you may remember from Pliny, who referred to it as the 'city of forty temples'—of what nature, some of them, we may well wonder, or to the region around Salalah, the summer capital of the sultan of Muscat and Oman, in search of a fabulous subterranean city, a buried city, which has been designated as the 'Nameless City' by more than one authority. These are the areas once inhabited by the Hymarites, twenty to thirty centuries ago. In these vicinities we are likely to find the almost legendary Irem, the City of Pillars, which was seen by the Arab, Abdul Alhazred, during his sojourn in the great southern desert, the Roba El Khaliye or 'Empty Space' of the ancients, which is also the 'Dahna' or 'Crimson Desert' of the modern Arabs, and held to be inhabited by protective evil spirits and death-dealing monsters. You will find it increasingly significant that we repeatedly encounter these so-called 'legends' of evil spirits and monsters, particularly since they are curiously corroborative of the central theses of the Cthulhu myth-pattern, wherever we go and in whatever directions we reach. You will ultimately conclude, even as I did long ago, that this is not coincidence."

I assured him that I had already come to a surprisingly great degree of belief in the astonishing things he had striven to impart to me; manifestly, full belief depended upon such further examination as might be possible for me to make, though I had considerable apprehension as to what the future might hold in store for me.

HE WENT on now to speak of the work of the Arab, Abdul Alhazred, the book *Al Azif*, which had become the *Necronomicon*. None other had ever come so close to revealing the secrets of Cthulhu and the cults of Cthulhu, of Yog-Sothoth, and indeed, of all the Ancient Ones; the book, originally secretly circulated after Alhazred's mysterious disappearance and subsequent death in 731 A. D., hinted of things so terrible that the mind of man could scarcely conceive of them, and, conceiving, would instantly elect to reject them rather than adopt into the realm of the possible any potential event of such a nature as to refute many of the most fundamental principles by which the races of mankind exist, and relegate man to a position of even greater insignificance than his present mote-like place in the cosmos. The work, moreover, was of such a nature that all ecclesiastical authorities, regardless of affiliation, condemned it and had so successfully fought its spread by the most rigid suppression that only a very few copies of the Greek and Latin versions of the text were to be had, and these few copies were all under lock and key in various institutions—the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, The British Museum, the library of the University of Buenos Aires, the Widener Library at Harvard, the library of Miskatonic University at Arkham. The Arabic original was lost centuries ago, at about 1228, when Olaus Wormius made his Latin translation of the book.

Professor Shrewsbury had read the entire work in both the Latin and the Greek versions, and he hoped to discover somewhere in Arabia a copy of the Arabic, if not, indeed, the original manuscript, which, he held, had not disappeared but had rather remained in Alhazred's possession, a copy which had been used by Wormius having vanished instead. This was conjecture on the professor's part, but there were sound reasons for such a conclusion, and it began to dawn upon me that possession of this priceless manuscript was doubtless the immediate goal behind the expedition to Arabia.

That there was something more lying in the back of Professor Shrewsbury's mind I could not doubt; and of this he was clearly unwilling to speak, for he gave no hint of its nature. Indeed, it was borne in

upon me presently that, however open and above-board Professor Shrewsbury was, there was much left to be desired in his palimpsest of information regarding the Cthulhu Mythos and such adjunctive data as he chose to speak about. What he sought, he confidently expected to find either in Irem or the unidentified "Nameless City," which might be identical with cities at either the site of Timna or Salalah.

At this point he offered me typescripts of certain portions of the *Necronomicon*, and sat waiting patiently while I read, skimming hastily the various papers he had handed me, but reading enough, nevertheless, to understand the significance of the portions he had had transcribed.

> Whosoever speaketh of Cthulhu shall remember that he but seemeth dead; he sleeps, and yet he does not sleep; he has died, and yet he is not dead; asleep and dead though he is, he shall rise again. Again, it should be shown that
>
> That is not dead which can eternal lie,
> And with strange eons even death may die.

And more . . .

> Great Cthulhu shall rise from R'lyeh, Hastur the Unspeakable shall return from the dark star which is in the Hyades near Aldebaran, the red eye of the bull, Nyarlathotep shall howl forever in the darkness where he abideth, Shub-Niggurath shall spawn his thousand young, and they shall spawn in turn and take dominion over all wood nymphs, satyrs, leprechauns, and the Little People. Lloigor, Zhar, and Ithaqua shall ride the spaces among the stars . . .

And yet more . . .

> He who hath the five-pointed stone shall find himself able to command all beings which creep, swim, crawl, walk, or fly even to the source from which there is no returning . . .

There was far more—oddly disturbing paragraphs concerning the return of the Ancient Ones, the devotion of the minions who served them, some in the guise of men, others in guises far stranger. There were yet more names reaching out from these pages to transfix with primal fear—Ubbo-Sathla, Azathoth, the blind idiot god, 'Umr At-Tawil, Tsathoggua, Cthugha, and yet others, all suggestive of a weird and horrible godhead, of a terror-fraught panoply of great, gigantic creatures, in no wise similar to man, as ancient as and quite possibly more ancient than earth itself, or even the solar system so familiar to the astronomers of our time. Indeed, after I had read some of the pages he gave me, I had little wish to read on, I begged tiredness as an excuse, and handed them back to him.

My companion thereupon bade me to sleep, while he, who apparently had no need of sleep went on with certain preparations he had yet to make. But before I slept, he took me up on deck, and walked to the rail with me, bidding me only to look about me and observe the water closely. We were not alone in our course, for a school of large fish, which I at first hazarded were porpoises, showed now and then about the ship; but at my mention of porpoises, Professor Shrewsbury only smiled sardonically, and said nothing. It came to me on the edge of sleep soon after that we were not likely to encounter a school of porpoises so little a way out of Southampton; and I knew then, I think, what it was that swam so furtively about the *Princess Ellen*, even if I was reluctant to admit it to myself at first.

And when I slept, I dreamed.

But this time the dreams were of a different calibre from the remarkable waking dream inspired by the golden mead—a curious dream pattern of dreadful and horrible beings, of the Deep Ones who could follow on land or in the water, of great, bat-winged creatures flying overhead, of something amorphous and awe-inspiring which lurked deep down in the sea, of vast, sunken continents, of lost, buried cities, ancient as the drifting sand, concealing something of great value in our need, a dream of flight and pursuit, and of an inevitable ending in which there was no escape from the ever

more frightful creatures who kept so doggedly upon our trail.

III

I PASS over the remainder of our trip, which was relatively uneventful. True, there was never a day when there was not to be seen something in the sea—a strangely humped back which was not as ichthyic as one would have liked, a shuddersome webbed foot which was horribly like a human hand with its fingers webbed, a terrifying glimpse of a face half human, half batrachian, with gleaming basilisk eyes, and a frightful travesty of a mouth slashed across its leatherlike skin—but these were only the slightest, most momentary glimpses, and it was difficult to tell how much was actually seen, and how much was imagined out of the strange facts I had confronted. And, since the ship kept serenely on its course, the other passengers gave no sign of having seen anything untoward, it was easy to conclude that what I did see, however disquieting, was grown in large part from a perfervid imagination which, in the circumstances, was certainly understandable enough.

Likewise, our disembarking at Aden was without incident. It was not Professor Shrewsbury's intention to remain in the port city, for, as he explained, the Deep Ones could find us as readily in a port city as on the sea, but were loath to venture far inland, away from water, since this was a necessary element for them, and, while they could sustain themselves for some time without water, a trek into desert country was not an undertaking destined to appeal to them.

"Nevertheless," said the professor with the utmost casualness, "we must expect that other followers will soon be in our vicinity, and we must be prepared for any eventuality."

Guides and porters for our expedition had been arranged for by cable and waited for us farther up the coast, at Damqut. Once we had reached Damqut some days later, it took but a few hours to have all in readiness for our departure. Several times, Professor Shrewsbury examined the streets and allies of Damqut in the vicinity with marked anxiety, but at last, convinced that there were nearby none other than certain suspicious individuals who might have belonged to the Deep Ones, and who could not harm any possessor of the five-pointed stone, he gave the signal to begin moving from the city.

OUR goal was the great unexplored waste of the Rub al 'Khali—Alhazred's "Roba El Khaliye." We were to make first for Salalah, and from there intended to strike northward toward other potential sites of the Nameless City mentioned by Abdul Alhazred. That my employer had certain definite ideas about the site of the Nameless City, I could not doubt; but he revealed nothing; so we set out, just precisely as many other expeditions had set out before us by camel caravan, though there had been one period of hesitation during which Professor Shrewsbury had contemplated making an earlier trip to Mareb by air. But, since this would not allow for any divagations from the main line of travel, he discarded the tentative plan.

Of the trip across the desert, from Damqut to Salalah and beyond, I know not what to write. Certainly, the events of that expedition could have been coincidental in their happening; I say they *could* have, but in the light of our purpose, and in that of the intentions of those little-known creatures who sought to prevent our reaching our goal, I do not think they were. On our first night in the desert, we lost one of our guides. Both my employer and I followed his tracks away from camp—he had been running, but his tracks had ceased suddenly; he had literally vanished into the air, leaving no trace of his going. No one had observed him rising from his place in the night.

Our second night was uneventful; on our third we lost a porter. This time Professor Shrewsbury and I found the poor fellow's body; we had fanned out beyond the place at which his footsteps stopped, and we found the body almost concealed in sand. A hasty examination showed that he would seem to have been dropped from a

singular height, for many of his bones were savagely broken.

We said nothing of his death to the rest of the party, though his disappearance, added to the guide's, spread uneasiness among the men. Desertions were not at all uncommon; the guide's vanishing had been accepted as a desertion, without question; the porter's had taken place too far from Damqut, and yet we were still on well-traveled roads, and the theory that he had deserted satisfied some of the men. But the uneasiness which had taken root among them was by no means confined to them, nor was it alone due to the loss of two of their number. I myself had felt it; a succession of events quite apart from the disappearance of the two men stirred it beyond my ability to suppress it.

The most curious event was not, in final analysis, the vanishing of our men. It was the intolerable conviction of being watched by invisible watchers. This was naturally most strong at night, but we were never without it even under the glaring sun, and by day it was accompanied by strange hallucinations, reported by guides and porters alike—of slithering creatures, resembling crocodiles, darting about at a little distance from our caravan, and manifestly following us. These could very easily have been desert animals, which could have grown into the habit of following caravans, except for the fact that they were not identifiable as native animals of any kind, they were of varying size, some of them but a few inches long, some many feet in length, and pronouncedly reptilian, and, finally, that some of them appeared to be garbed in unrecognizable costumes, sight of which only served to further excite the members of our caravan.

THESE strange creatures would seem to have been at least half unreal, for they appeared and disappeared with such agility that more than once they seemed to vanish before our eyes. They were very probably not malign; none ever approached too closely to the camp or caravan, and all vanished at once on movement toward them. Professor Shrewsbury shot at them several times, but with astonishingly ill effect; he struck none of them, though there were times when he could hardly have missed. Yet he did. Their following had an unusual effect on my employer; far from becoming uneasy at their presence, he seemed actually to enjoy having them near us, and plagued the men constantly as to their numbers, had they noticed any increase, and the like.

We were perhaps seventeen days out of Damqut, and already well past Salalah before any increase in the numbers of our unusual companions was reported. By that time we had lost in all six men, and those who remained were becoming extremely restive. This was not alone because of the dwindling number of the men on the expedition, but because, as their spokesman pointed out, we approached a forbidden and accursed region of the country, one which all Arabians shunned in mortal fear.

My employer, however, was blind to any appeal. He confided that he had expected rebellion, and that this in itself was an excellent sign, for the writings of Abdul Alhazred were specific in that the region of the Nameless City was shunned by the natives. His adamance before the entreaty of the men that he alter his course was strengthened by the occurrence of an even more significant event, though its significance was lost on me at first.

It was late that night when my employer woke me. He was unusually excited.

"Come," he whispered.

I went with him, wonderingly.

He knelt down just outside the tent and held his hand, palm down, above the surface of the sand.

"Feel," he commanded.

I did so, and was aware, as I had already been aware about my ankles, of the movement of an ice-cold current of air flowing steadily across the surface of the sand.

"Do you feel it?" he asked.

"The wind? Yes. What is it?"

"Alhazred's 'spectral wind'. There is an account of it in the *Necronomicon*. There is yet another in the writings of the late H. P. Lovecraft. Both pertain to the same source —the Nameless City. From which direction does it come?"

"Almost due north."

"That will be our route tomorrow. We will not feel the wind by day, but at night we will know it again. If we follow it, it will lead us to our goal. Then our real work begins, Mr. Colum—only then. And I am very much afraid that you and I will be quite alone at it; so it will behoove us to make sure of our camels and such supplies as are absolutely essential to the two of us for the trip back to Salalah."

We turned away from the direction of the border of Oman next morning, and struck out toward the heart of the Rub Al Khali. There was much muttering among the men; many dark scowls came out upon their faces and remained there throughout the day. But they were still with us by nightfall, whatever their fears. Too, there were with us an increasing number of our strange desert companions, but these showed a curious aversion to the oasis at which we encamped for the night.

ONCE again, in the night, my employer sought the "spectral wind" and found it, much stronger now, with sufficient velocity to ripple our tents. But he and I were not the only members of the party to be aware of it. In a very short time after it had begun to blow, which was not long after sundown, the men had become cognizant of it, and, feeling it, they gave vent to such a bedlam of complaint, that Professor Shrewsbury was compelled to talk to them, which he did in Arabic, explaining to me later what it was that had passed between them.

"We cannot go on," the leader of the men had said.

"Why not?"

"Feel. It is the death wind."

"I feel it. Will you remain here while Mr. Colum and I go on?"

The leader consulted the men, who were divided in their opinions. Nevertheless, he believed that the majority of them would stay.

"Very well." Professor Shrewsbury turned to me. "We'll take that special equipment I have, lash it securely to a camel, and make our own camels ready. You and I will go on now; the wind began approximately two hours after sundown, traveling much faster than you or I can travel. Nevertheless, if we make haste, we should reach its source before dawn, for it will return the way it came."

Within an hour we were moving through the limitless desert, into the wind out of the north. We traveled as speedily as our camels allowed us to, Professor Shrewsbury completely confident of reaching his goal at or before dawn. The night was not hot, but the wind into which we rode was an Arctic wind, utterly alien to the desert, and redolent with unfamiliar odors and fragrances. Stars were myriad in the heavens; small wonder that Arabs were among the earliest known astronomers! Yet I could not help wondering, looking up at them, whether indeed there lay in those star-spaces the colossal beings of the mythology about which my employer had spoken—the Elder Gods, the Ancient Ones, whose very struggle did indeed parallel the ancient legends of mankind, even before the setting down of the banishment from heaven of Satan and his followers.

Shortly after midnight, the wind changed its course. It was indeed returning, even as Professor Shrewsbury had predicted it would, for now it swept northward, rapidly gaining momentum and force. Nor did it diminish in velocity until just before dawn, when there occurred a perceptible slackening of its vigor. By this time I was exceedingly tired, but Professor Shrewsbury urged his camel onward, confident that the site of the Nameless City lay not far ahead.

Nor was his confidence misplaced, for shortly before the oddly cold wind died away, he gave a shout and pointed ahead to what seemed to be a solitary stone in the expanse of sand over which the sun was soon to rise blazingly. I could have known by the electrifying aura of malignancy which had descended upon me that we had come at last to the goal for which Professor Shrewsbury had sought; here indeed was a hidden city, and the occasional stones which were revealed so fleetingly by the shifting sands, spoke somberly of a civilization ancient before the Christian era had begun.

I wondered how my employer hoped to descend into this hidden city. He had certainly no chance whatsoever of penetrating to its street level by means of the picks and shovels we had brought; for manifestly the city was buried too deeply. But this problem concerned me only briefly, for Professor Shrewsbury made no effort to dismount; instead, he followed the now fast failing wind, urging his camel anxiously forward, until he outdistanced me, leaving me still threading my way among the pinnacles of that buried ruin. When at last he dismounted, he was considerably ahead of me; I found him beside a cavernous opening, skilfully hidden among the sands.

As I too dismounted, the last of the wind died away, hushing around my feet into the opening, which led down sand-covered steps. Out of it yawned an obliterating blackness, and from it rose a coolness which spoke of moisture below. But Professor Shrewsbury was already unloading the third camel, which had been tied to my own and had hindered my keeping up with my employer.

"Is this the place?" I asked.

"This is the place," he answered quite confidently. "I know, because I have been here."

I gazed at him in perplexity. "But why, then, this search?" I asked.

"Because I have never come over land, but only by air. Come, let me show you."

HE LED the way down the steps. From the desert, which was already extremely hot in the rays of the rising sun, to this cool cavernous place was a step as from tropical to sub-Arctic regions; moreover, the air grew even cooler and more damp as we descended, and it was borne in upon me presently that, once the initial sequence of stone steps had been descended, we were in a kind of natural cavern, which lay, because of the steep, staired declivities over which we passed, far deeper beneath the sands than we might otherwise have imagined. Perhaps at some time it had been crowned by a superstructure, long since destroyed; but now it shone and glowed eerily in the beams of my employer's flashlight.

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I was struck almost at once by the evidence all around us of the ancient civilization which had once held sway here. Though many side passages led into the various rooms of the central cavern, all were far too low to permit of a man's standing upright; but wherever altars occurred—and it was patent that the cavern had been used as a temple—they were suggestively low, as were they made for creatures which crawled rather than walked upright. The stone roof of the cavern had been worked on by stonecutters; and primitive artists had decorated the walls, which were filled with the most horribly disquieting drawings, depicting not men but the events of a history in which none but saurian and reptilian creatures took part—the very same, I concluded with disturbing reluctance, as those crocodile-like beings which had watched the approach of our caravan from afar and accompanied us to the oasis where the remainder of our expedition still waited.

My employer, however, appeared to have a further goal in view, for he walked rapidly from room to room in the cavern until he came to the end, and there he went around the altar and disclosed a stone door carved from the rock of the wall. This he opened with ease, revealing yet another flight of steps, a steep declivity leading down into hideously repellent depth, from which rose a kind of foetor not unpleasantly spiced with odors suggestive of incense. Without hesitation, Professor Shrewsbury plunged into the gloom of that endless passage—for indeed, it was endless; our descent took over two hours, for the passage altered height, so that it was necessary from time to time to walk with the utmost care. We descended from level to level, until it seemed to me that we must indeed be inconceivably far below the surface of the earth at that place.

Yet at last we reached a level floor, at first in a place where neither of us could quite stand upright, but presently, by dint of shuffling along, through a widening corridor in which, much to my astonishment, there were wooden cases with fronts of a substance akin to glass and yet not glass—but these were clearly cases which had never known the hand of man, artful in construction, coffin-like in size, and affixed to the walls and along the floor of the passage. My employer went from one to another of them, eagerly, and at last stopped before one of them with a long, low sigh.

He turned his flashlight full upon it and beckoned me forward.

"Do not be surprised at what you see, Mr. Colum," he cautioned me.

I do not know what I expected to see, but what I did see could hardly have been any more startling. For certainly the last thing I expected to see beneath the pseudo-glass of the case was the body of a young man of my own time, surely of approximately my own age, and, if his clothing were any criterion, either an Englishman or an American, with the balance in favor of the latter.

"Is this, too, a dream or an illusion?" I cried.

"No, Mr. Colum, it is not," answered Professor Shrewsbury. "Nor is this one—nor this."

"Good God! Three of them. How did these corpses come here?"

"Ah, they are not corpses."

"But they are surely not alive!"

"Pray remember Alhazred's inexplicable couplet—'That is not dead which can eternal lie, And with strange eons even death may die.' No, they are not dead; but, paradoxical as it may seem, they are not alive either. They are deposited here to wait for that time when their life essence, their souls, their astrals—name it what you will—are brought back. For this is the secret of the Byakhee birds; they do not fly to Celaeno, but here, to this domain of Hastur, where the bodies of these young men are thus preserved. Soon now they themselves will return from Celaeno, and together all of us will make the final journey of this incredible search which has now come to the threshold of the secret."

I THOUGHT of what he had said, recalling his words about the Byakhee and their response to the stone whistle I carried in my pocket.

But where, then, were they? I put my question into words.

"Some of them may be here. But they are in Kadath-in-the-Cold-Waste, on the shunned Plateau of Leng, and in certain other places, some within our own plane, some existing conterminously on another plane."

"And who are these young men?"

"The first one is Andrew Phelan; he helped me in Arkham. The second is Abel Keane; he, too, was helpful—at Innsmouth. The third is Claiborne Boyd, who undertook a strange mission to Peru."

"And the fourth will be Nayland Colum," I cried.

"Let us hope not," said my employer fervently. "If we succeed here, it should no longer be necessary to take such means to escape pursuit."

"You knew they were here," I charged. "How?"

"Because I, too, was one of them for a while—and even before any of them came here, I spent almost twenty years in such a case. I am far older than you would believe, Mr. Colum—if we add those two decades." He turned away. "But it is not our purpose to linger here. We must go on, yet farther. There are crypts below into which I have never seen."

He paused only long enough to add to my burdens a share of his own, which were becoming too heavy for him; then he went on, and again we descended narrow stone steps, again we crouched and crawled through narrower passages, moving from one level to another. How far we went into the bowels of the earth, I have no way of knowing; by the light on my watch, I saw that the hour was already well past noon, though I felt, strangely, neither hunger nor thirst.

Far down, near the end of the passage, the walls revealed arresting paintings of the utmost and most extravagant grotesquerie. Here there were set down a sequence of scenes which must have depicted the Nameless City in its distant past, though it seemed most peculiar that the scenes of the city were consistently done as by moonlight, so that they were elusively spectral in their effect.

A scrutiny of the pictures, however, revealed a secret, hidden world, subterranean beyond question, where great cities flourished amidst high mountains and fertile valleys; this country existed side by side with the moonlit monoliths of the Nameless City, shown now in decadence, with the sacred reptiles dying away, and their spirits hovering above, while ornately robed priests cursed the waters and the air. One terrible final scene showed an emaciated group of the saurian inhabitants of the Nameless City setting upon and tearing apart a human being.

Beyond this point, however, the gray walls and ceiling were devoid of all ornamentation, for which I was understandably grateful.

WE CAME at last to a great bronze door upon which was set an inscription in Arabic, which my employer translated aloud: "He who came, hath returned. He who saw, hath been blinded. He who set down the secrets, hath been silenced. Here he shall abide forever, neither in darkness nor the light. Let none disturb him." He turned to me, his excitement obvious even in the darkness of the room. "Can it be other than the Arab Alhazred?" he demanded. "For he alone came, saw, and set down the secrets."

"He was killed."

"Tortured and slain, beyond question," agreed Professor Shrewsbury calmly. "Legend has it that he was snatched by an invisible monster in broad daylight and devoured horribly before a great audience; this is the story the twelfth century biographer, Ebn Khallikan, hands down; but it is more than possible that the devouring was an illusion and that he was brought here to undergo punishment and death for his temerity in revealing the secrets of the Ancient Ones. Come, we are going in."

The bronze door resisted our efforts for some time, but at last it gave, opening into a small, square room, which was barren of all furnishing with the exception of a squat stone sarcophagus in the center of the room.

Professor Shrewsbury advanced upon this without hesitation and moved back the

lid, disclosing tattered remnants of clothing, a few fragments of bone, and dust.

"Is it he?" I asked.

My employer nodded.

"And we have come all this way for this?"

"Not alone this, Mr. Colum. Be patient. What follows now informs us whether we succeed or fail. Tell us, you still have the mead?"

"Yes."

"Take but a little of it."

I followed his example.

"And now pray compose yourself. He will need to draw upon you for his coming."

Drowsiness was already coming upon me. Under Professor Shrewsbury's guidance, I stretched out on the floor near the sarcophagus, and almost immediately experienced a dream similar in character to that first mead-inspired dream in my Soho quarters. Once again I saw myself taking part in a drama, this time far more outré than that other, which had been prosaic enough in essence.

I watched Professor Shrewsbury encircle the sarcophagus and both of us with a large band of blue powder, which he immediately set afire. This burned eerily but brightly, so that the entire room was illumined, and the sarcophagus stood out in high relief. My employer then constructed a series of cabalistic designs on the floor about the sarcophagus, again completely encircling it. Thereafter he took from his person certain documents which resembled those transcriptions from the *Necronomicon* he had given me to read, and from one of them he recited in a clear voice.

> "Him who knows the place of R'lyeh;
> him who holds the secret of far
> Kadath;
> him who keeps the key to Cthulhu;
> by the five-pointed star, by the sign of
> Kish, by the assent of the Elder
> Gods, let him come forth."

This he recited three times, at each adjuration completing a drawing on the floor. At the conclusion of his recitation, he waited. Now there occurred a most unusual and slightly disturbing phenomenon. I felt myself surrendering something of myself, as were I drained of my very life-force, and at the same time there was a movement above the sarcophagus, at first little more than a stirring of air, then a gradual misting, and then before my eyes the remnants and tatters of clothing in the sarcophagus began to lift up into the air and take ragged shape about the misting which was growing steadily denser, losing its capacity for darkness, so that presently there hung above the sarcophagus a spectral image, a blasphemous caricature of a man, which had neither body nor face, but only a semblance of each, with black, glowing pits where eyes should have been beneath a torn burnous and a dark shapeless body, very thin, upon which the tatters of garments which long ago were flowing robes hung loosely.

This terrifying apparition hung in the air, motionless.

Professor Shrewsbury addressed it. "Abdul Alhazred, where is Cthulhu?"

The spectre raised a sleeve and indicated its mouth. There was no tongue; it could not speak.

Professor Shrewsbury was not daunted. "Is he at R'lyeh?" And, receiving no immediate answer, he mouthed these unintelligible words. *"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fgtagn,"* which, I understood later, was a ritual phrase meaning, "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

This time, however, the apparition nodded just perceptibly.

"Where is R'lyeh?"

Once again the horrible revenant of Abdul Alhazred pointed to its tongueless mouth.

"Construct a chart on the ceiling," directed Professor Shrewsbury.

THE apparition thereupon went through the motions of drawing a meticulously conceived chart upon the ceiling. Since it had nothing with which to draw, it could not make a mark of any kind; yet, so potent was the effect of the mead, it was manifest that Professor Shrewsbury followed the

labored movements with ease, copying them on a piece of paper as the spectre drew them.

There emerged presently a complicated map which represented no known portion of the earth, but I understood, as my employer did, that Abdul Alhazred's conception of the earth was perhaps vastly different from our own, and that his reconstruction of any portion of the earth's surface was dependent upon the limited knowledge of his time, to which he might have added such private knowledge as he had amassed through methods which had gained him sufficient information to enable him to put together the *Al Azif*.

Having finished his drawing, Professor Shrewsbury held it up before the apparition he had summoned from the gulf.

"This is the place?"

The apparition nodded.

"And of these islands, which is the one above R'lyeh?"

The spectre indicated a tiny dot on my employer's map, then made a cryptic gesture which Professor Shrewsbury immediately understood.

"Ah, it sinks and returns."

The spectre once again inclined its head.

Professor Shrewsbury was manifestly now satisfied with this interrogation, and he now turned to the subject which I had felt all along lay in the back of his mind.

"Tell me, Alhazred, where is the lost *Al Azif*?"

There was no immediate reply to the professor's query; the apparition remained motionless for several seconds; then its head made a slow half-turn, which might have been a negative gesture or simply an attempt to see something which was invisible to other eyes.

"Is it in this room?" pressed my employer.

The spectre nodded.

"Is it in the sarcophagus?"

The spectre shook its head.

The professor glanced rapidly around. There was no place of concealment save in the walls or floor.

The walls?" he hazarded.

Again his guess was confirmed.

"On the south?"

No.

"On the north?"

No.

"The east?"

Yes. But now the apparition seemed to be trying to say something more in its eerie fashion; the pathetic, tongueless figure, eyeless, too, for eyes and tongue had been removed before death in the torture inflicted upon the mad Arab for his temerity in writing about the secrets of the Ancient Ones and their minions, appeared to wish grievously to say something of significance.

THE professor, seeing, tried to draw it out. Was it about the manuscript? A quick nod. Was the manuscript guarded? Yes. Were the guards here? No. Were they below? Yes. That was all? No, there was yet more. The manuscript was not complete? Yes, that was it. Some of it had been destroyed before Alhazred could conceal it? Yes.

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"I will take what is left," said the professor. "Return now whence you came, Abdul Alhazred."

Immediately the tatters and the bone fragments fell together and collapsed; the mist settled like dust and vanished; the blue fires around the sarcophagus began to dim and die away. At the same time strength flowed back into me, the professor rose from his knees, to which he had descended to copy that fantastic drawing constructed in the air against the ceiling, and closed the sarcophagus.

Then he strode quickly to my side and shook me.

"Hurry now, Mr. Colum," he whispered. "We have what we want; there is no time to be lost."

We began then to examine the east wall of the room for the stone concealing the fragments of the manuscript of the *Al Azif*. It would be low, the professor reasoned, for the Arab would unquestionably have been bound or chained in some manner, and his ability to reach far up along the wall would have been curtailed. My employer worked with feverish haste, pausing from time to time to listen, so that it seemed we were examining the great stones for a long time before we came upon one loose enough to serve as a place of concealment. Yet we had not been long, and behind the stone we found the parchment pages of the *Al Azif;* these Professor Shrewsbury hastily thrust into his coat. Then we replaced the stone, and together left the room, closing the great bronze door behind us.

For a moment more, Professor Shrewsbury stood at the threshold listening, his head cocked a little toward the stygian darkness at our right, the great maw of blackness which hinted of still further mystery beyond the place to which we had come.

IT WAS then that the sound began. Hitherto, the only noise which had reached our ears was the thin scuttering of sand borne along on the wind at the steps leading down from the desert above; but this had ceased soon after our advance into the nether regions, and we ourselves were then the authors of the only sounds, pertinent to our descent, which we heard. But now, emanating from some dread crypt even farther below, there swelled and grew a sound which can only be described as a low moaning, accompanied by a rushing as of a mighty wind—a moaning as of many voices, but, what was most hideously suggestive, the voices had a totally non-human quality impossible to describe, save only as a sound fraught with the uttermost horror.

I saw by my watch that the hour of sundown was near, and felt at the same time the beginning once again of the "spectre wind," which manifestly came from far deeper than subterranean caverns into which we had penetrated. I felt an overpowering urge to take flight and yielded to it; but Professor Shrewsbury soon caught hold of me and stopped my precipitous escape.

"Wait," he urged, "we cannot outrun it. With the stones we are safe. Let us take refuge in a side passage until the worst of the wind has exhausted itself."

We accordingly crawled into one of the low auxiliary passages leading off from the main corridor, and lay there in silence, with our flashlights turned off. There was soon apparent in the corridor which we had left a kind of gray illumination, not light, but a kind of emanation from the walls, so that it was possible to descry the farther wall, and to make out other passages leading away from the central corridor. Then the wind came; it came in a furious blast, accompanied by a mounting bedlam of voices, which sounded like a distant outcry of screams and curses, of ululations and agonized wails, riding the wind. And, as I stared fixedly outward, it seemed to me that the wind itself bore along with it countless faces, saurian, reptilian, batrachian, all bewailing their bondage to the crypts below the Nameless City; they flowed past in a never-ending stream, their brute mouths open in their outcry against this fate which doomed them forever to ride the terrible spectre wind, whose arctic temperature penetrated to where we lay and chilled to the bone.

Whence came they? From what vast, underground reaches did the wind rise to sweep forth nightly upon its round over the

desert places which few human feet ever trod? And by what accursed sorcery were they so bound to this inferno of darkness? Was it indeed that the drawings on the walls told in truth of the decay and ending of that ancient civilization which had stood long before the time of man, and that there was somewhere still deeper in this earth such a subterrene paradise as that depicted on the walls—a paradise in which there was light as of sunlight, and in which the gardens and valleys were fertile beyond the dreams of men who walked upon the desert above?

Or was it that this paradise had in its turn fallen before the invaders who had conquered the Nameless City, the minions of some hellish being perhaps worshipped, perhaps unknown among the dwellers of that place?

The wind's icy fury, added to the cacophony of the terrible voices, made a shocking clamor in this enclosed place; it rang deafeningly, so that I had perforce to clap my hands over my ears lest I suffer the bursting of my eardrums. Professor Shrewsbury did likewise, and together we lay so for half an hour or perhaps more, before the shrieking blast of the wind had passed beyond our place of concealment, leaving only a steady, unhurried flowing of cold air moving to the surface above.

"Now," said my employer. "But be careful. I could not say what guardians may have been placed at the tomb of Alhazred."

THE ascent to the desert place where the shifting sands hid the face of the Nameless City was interminable. From time to time, my employer stopped and turned his sightless eyes back to face that darkness with his own. Now and then I thought, I could not be sure, that I heard scuffling sounds, as of hidden pursuers, but Professor Shrewsbury said nothing, only hurrying faster to mount the precipitous stairs toward the uncertain haven of the starlit desert far overhead. The caverns and corridors rang with our footsteps, the icy wind whipped around our ankles, the dwindling voices still sounded with a ghost-like insistence from far ahead of us, from out on the desert where they scattered and were diminished over the sands before being drawn in once more and consigned again to that waiting place deep down below.

There was soon no doubt but that there were pursuers behind us, but of their nature I had no conception. My employer did not seem unduly disturbed, but I observed that he urged me to hasten and himself forged ahead with increased haste, murmuring that our camels might have been frightened by the wind and gone off, that our guides and porters would most certainly have begun to despair of us, for it was now the second night since our departure from the camp at the oasis where first we had become aware of the wind. By this time, too, I was unbelievably weary and exhausted, not having slept for more than forty hours, and feeling the need acutely, because I could no longer seem to distinguish between the reality all around me and the illusion of sights and sounds into which I found myself falling with increasing frequency.

BUT at last we reached the surface, and, though our camels were not immediately to be seen, they were not far away. They had evidently taken fright at the voice of the wind, and had moved away from the mouth of the pit, from which a little whirlpool of sand still came in the wind, and out of which, doubtless, at the height of the blast from below, a veritable sandstorm must have risen. My employer seemed now possessed of an almost unseemly haste; he leapt upon his camel as soon as the beast had knelt for him, and urged the creature forward with brisk commands. The course we had to follow was clearly indicated by the direction of the wind, which was certain to lead us to the oasis below the Nameless City, even as it had led us on the previous night to the site of the city itself.

As before, the night was dark; the glittering stars were partially hidden by clouds which rode high over; the desert shone with a kind of macabre glowing, as from some dark inner light which had only a spectral reality; and there was no sound beyond the sounds our camels made and the hushing of

the wind, now a steady movement to the south. From time to time, Professor Shrewsbury cast glances backward, but if he saw anything in the starlit expanse behind us, he gave no sign. Yet there was an undeniable aura of fear which rode with us; it could not be gainsaid that our invasion of the tomb of the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, had loosed forces beyond our power to foresee, and too, the warnings against molestation of the remains in the sarcophagus had been unmistakable, even though my employer had remained undaunted in the face of it.

Clearly, if there were nothing in the desert between the Nameless City and ourselves, Professor Shrewsbury expected something to be there or to come from that shunned ruin so seldom trodden by the foot of man, for his attitude bespoke his fear—not of the minions of the Ancient Ones, for he feared them not, but of the powers which the Ancient Ones themselves could command and send forth to do their bidding.

Once there was a ghastly ululation far behind us, like a creature baying on our trail—but that sound came from no throat known to mankind; and at its sound the professor pressed his camel still more, and the beast itself, as if aware of an eldritch horror behind it, became more animated and heeded its driver. Yet, despite the manifest chill of the fear of unknown horror, we reached the camp at the oasis without incident. There we found that our guides and porters had deserted to a man, but they had providentially left behind them enough provisions to see us once again safely back in Salalah or Damqut.

THAT we did eventually reach Damqut seems to me now in retrospect evidence that, if we were being pursued, as I am convinced we were, we were also under a protection other than that afforded us by the gray five-pointed stones bearing the seal of the Elder Gods. It was on our fourth night out of the oasis below the Nameless City that I caught sight of something that flew between us and the stars. My employer was immediately apprehensive, but his sightless eyes through the strange power he had enabled him to identify our winged companions, for they flew ever in our vicinity.

"The Byakhee," he murmured, after an examination of the skies. "I had thought some of them must be in the vicinity of the Nameless City. For one moment, I feared it might be the Wind-Walker, Ithaqua, against whom I am afraid our talisman would be of no avail. But no—if these are here, there are others."

"Who follows us?" I asked.

"The dwellers of the city," he answered enigmatically.

"But there were no dwellers in the Nameless City," I protested.

"I thought you saw them rising from the gulf."

"Those drawings—were they real?" I asked.

"Oh, yes—there was a civilization in that place which antedates mankind. Saurian and reptilian—followers of Cthulhu. I thought you had understood—the Nameless City was at one time a sea city, buried far under the ocean's surface eons ago, long before the upheaval which brought that portion of Arabia to the surface and sent the waters away, leaving the aquatic inhabitants of that world to die out of their element beneath the blazing sun which followed the cataclysm."

"What cataclysm?"

"I have no doubt it was the same which sank the lost continents of Atlantis and Mu. And that in turn may well have been the Deluge of the Christian Mythos. I assure you, Mr. Colum, there are many disturbing and provocative accounts in the ancient books which are oddly corroborative of the oldest legends, persisting in one form or another from generation to generation. So the followers of Cthulhu perished here, save for those at the lowermost depths, which give rise to water still, and also to the icy wind which courses upward to the desert and returns. There they are still, but of such nature that they are no longer subject to all our dimensional laws and pursue us in that same apparitional shape we saw before reaching the Nameless City."

Thereafter I watched for those curious saurian creatures, and indeed, they were all

around us, appearing and disappearing with uncanny facility, offering us no difficulty beyond cutting off our third camel with some of our provisions, a loss which was somewhat alleviated by our purchase of provisions from a caravan encountered halfway to Salalah en route Oman. What happened to the beast, we did not know; it had been cut off during the night, but our own camels were unmolested, perhaps because they were much closer to us than the third beast had been.

The Byakhee were visible on three nights between the oasis near the Nameless City and the port of Damqut. But they shunned civilization and its cities. Yet it was in the cities and along the coast that my employer most feared the menace of pursuit, and immediately upon reaching Salalah, he made an accurate copy of the precious map, and posted it to an address in London, following it with a second copy, posted to an address in Singapore, both to be held pending his arrival. The fragmentary manuscript, however, he retained on his person. Having done this, he faced the remainder of our trip with greater equanimity, though he was under no illusions as to the nature of our voyage.

And in this, certainly, he was not unduly pessimistic. For, though our journey from Damqut to Mukalla and finally Aden was comparatively peaceful and without the alarms which might have been anticipated, the voyage from Aden into the Red Sea on our way to the Süez and the Mediterranean, was, however, beset with all manner of difficulties.

ALMOST at once, Professor Shrewsbury observed that the dockworkers busy loading the ship on which we had taken passage, the *Sana,* appeared to be curiously deformed, so that the majority of them gave the aspect of hopping and shuffling at their work rather than of walking in orthodox fashion. It was not too noticeable; undoubtedly most passersby who glanced at them saw nothing; but to a trained observer like my employer, the significance of the dockworkers' traits was not lost. It was possible, he explained, that their presence was nothing more than a coincidence; in Massachusetts, certain coastal towns harbored a surprising number of the descendants of a horrible experiment in cross-breeding between the natives and the Deep Ones; such experiments need not be considered to have been confined to one area of the globe, for these dockworkers strongly resembled certain residents of Innsmouth, Massachusetts, and the hill country in the vicinity of Dunwich, where other hybrid peoples once flourished.

But the dockworkers offered us no difficulties, and it was not until we were well out of Aden on our way up the Red Sea that my employer became conscious of the nature of our pursuit. He came to my cabin only last night, in marked agitation.

"You saw them?" he asked without preamble, referring to aquatic pursuers.

I nodded.

"The Deep Ones, certainly," he said. "But there is something more. Listen."

At first I heard nothing but the sound of the ship's passage; then, slowly, insidiously, I became aware of another sound, one that should not have been out on the sea, the shuddersome sound of ponderous steps moving through a great depth of swampy or boggy soil, distant treading and sucking sounds.

"You hear?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"It is something other than the Deep Ones, something against whom our armor is too weak. You have the golden mead and the whistle? You remember the formula?" I assured him that I did.

"Be prepared to use them. But the time is not yet."

* * * * *

IT IS now late in the following day. Early this afternoon a storm brewing from our rear burst upon us, and its fury has been mounting steadily ever since. Wind, lightning, thunder, and torrents of rain have engulfed the *Sana,* and the violence of the storm appears to be mounting. I have set down this account specifically so that such of my effects as are held in London will continue to be held pending word of my death, for my employer assures me that the

time for that is not yet. He has made it clear, too, that it would seem to be a matter of making our escape or of permitting the needless sacrifice of everyone on board the *Sana,* which he intends to prevent.

Professor Shrewsbury has just looked in to say that it is time. He had taken some of the golden mead, he has his whistle ready. I can see him from where I sit writing, I can hear him shouting into the storm, *"Iä! Iä! Hastur! Hastur cf'ayak 'vulgtmm, vugtlagln, vulgtmm! Ai! Ai! Hastur!"* He stands upright against the fury of the storm, he falls back only before a lashing tentacle from the deep below.

And then came the birds. Great God! What beings! What spawn of some forgotten hell!

But he mounts one of them, unafraid.

Something thrusts hard against the ship, something come just too late to seize its prey.

I know what I must do . . .

From the Log of the *Sana:*

The storm of Friday caused the loss of two passengers, Professor Laban Shrewsbury, and Nayland Colum, who were traveling together. Both were seen outside their cabins, despite the violence of the storm, and were presumed to have been swept off into the sea and drowned. Though the storm abated with remarkable suddenness immediately after the loss of these passengers, no trace of them could be found. The proper forms have been forwarded. . . .

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It piqued the curiosity—that a clock could be lethal. . . .

Heading by Joseph Eberle

I

OF ALL the tiny, fortified towns sprinkled along the edge of the Black Forest in Bavaria the quaintest is Rothenburg. It crowns a steep hill, its guard towers facing out across the twisting Tauber River. At noon and at midnight, the shutters on the highest window in the old clock tower open slowly and a mechanical dummy of a 15th century Burgomeister bows gravely. For a few seconds the old nobleman, moved by a medieval mechanism, glares down at the cobblestones of the town square—the same stones that clanged under the hooves of the Crusaders' horses—then the Burgomeister straightens up abruptly and the shutters clap to.

On fair afternoons the sun, diffused by the leaves of the lindens, throws mottled shadows across the alleys of the burg. Children scampering home from the *gauschule,* cluster briefly around a scissors grinder or skip along in the wake of a hurdy-gurdy. Old men sit in the shade of the tinkling fountain and young girls sing softly to themselves as they fill their kettles with water.

Just off the square, down a narrow, twisting street, sits the shop of Wilhelm Stunde. It is a tiny building, bent over with age like its proprietor. Through the dusty shop window a hundred clocks, of a hundred sizes, stare out at the people passing through the alley.

In the front of the window a miniature shepherdess flicks the seconds away with dainty motions of her crook. A blacksmith in the corner shapes the minutes with stiff blows of his hammer on a thumb-sized anvil. Back in the shadows at the rear Father

Time reaps his hours with slow, decisive strokes of his scythe.

Wilhelm was famous throughout the Tauber Valley for his clocks. "Old Wilhelm can fix it—if anyone can," the peasants used to say. And sometimes they might add "He's a queer sort, that Wilhelm. But he knows his business."

And Wilhelm's ingenuity wasn't limited to clocks alone. He had made the Carillon in the cathedral spire. His gifted fingers had fashioned the image of the Burgomeister that sat in the clock tower. The bell that sounded the hours in vibrant tones that rang out across the city owed their resonance to Wilhelm's sensitive ears.

The children often gathered before the dusty window of Wilhelm's shop to watch with wonder the assortment of figures and numbers that told the time—all accurate within a fraction of a second.

Sometimes, if Wilhelm were in a cheerful nood, he invited the youngsters in to amaze them with some new, oddly contrived clock that would widen their eyes as they watched. It might be a large timepiece, with figures that came out and performed on the hours. Or a small clock, with tiny chimes that made the children tingle all over. They would giggle and laugh and a passerby would say to his companion, "There's old Wilhelm, making the children's ears ring again." And the companion, remembering his own childhood, and the wonderfully exciting, all too brief, adventures in Wilhelm's shop, would nod and smile wistfully to himself.

Inside the shop, amid the cobwebs and dust and a thousand tiny wheels and gears, Wilhelm would be bending over an ailing timepiece and probing its mechanism gently, gradually coaxing it back to life.

A SPLENDIDLY dressed cavalier, evidently unused to traveling on foot, picked his way carefully down the alley and halted uncertainly before the shabby building. He squinted at the weathered script on the front of the shop and then observed the huge watch—Wilhelm's trademark—hanging from a rusty iron rod over the door.

It was beneath the dignity of the Baron—the eighth Baron of Rothenburg—to visit such a shop. But Wilhelm had constructed the mechanical image of the old Burgomeister that sat in the town clock tower. And the Baron was pleased, more than pleased, with the image of his great grandfather. Didn't everyone say that the figure was amazingly life-like?

"You can almost see him breathing!" had said the physician, on the day when the new clock was dedicated. Yes, it was a masterpiece, this clock, and a fitting memorial to the Baron's ancestor. Besides, local custom held that some part of the payment—a florin at least, must be presented in person by the Baron. It was the way the people assured themselves of a certain contact with their nobility.

The Baron pushed the warped door open and hesitated for a second until his eyes adjusted to the gloom inside. Wilhelm, recognizing the nobleman, sprang up from his bench and bowed as low as his twisted spine would permit.

"Your Excellency!"

"Good day," said the Baron, nodding to the old clockmaker. "I have come to thank you for your efforts on the clock—it was an excellent piece of work, a real accomplishment."

"Your Excellency is too kind," Wilhelm said.

"Not at all," said the Baron. "I am quite pleased. You will find a little something extra with your fee," he said, tossing a leather pouch to the craftsman.

"A thousand thanks, Herr Baron," said Wilhelm, feeling the weight of the pouch. The Baron, distracted by the ticking which sounded from every nook of the tiny room, was inspecting an egg-shaped timepiece on the shelf.

"A dull business, I imagine," said the Baron, who had been a soldier most of his life.

"Pardon, Excellency?"

"Rather dull, I imagine," repeated the Baron. "Fooling around with clocks, I mean."

The Baron passed on to a large clock in the corner which had the twelve apostles marching around its crown.

"Not at all, Your Excellency," said Wilhelm. "Not a bit of it."

"Hein?" asked the Baron, raising an eyebrow. "There are only twelve hours a day, only sixty minutes in an hour, sixty seconds to a minute. What more can a clock say?" The Baron stopped to watch a small ship rocking endlessly back and forth across the face of a timepiece on the wall.

"Ah, but there are many kinds of clocks, Herr Baron," said Wilhelm, taking off his apron and stepping over to the Baron. "Here, for instance, is a clock that tells the seasons." Wilhelm pointed to a medium-sized timepiece with a revolving face that showed the condition of the moon.

"And here," said Wilhelm, "here is a clock that shows the signs of the Zodiac. And another clock that shows the the rise and fall of the tides."

"Yes, of course," the Baron chuckled. "But a clock never really does anything important, it's always passive, so to speak. There isn't a clock, for instance," said the Baron with a smile, "that could kill a man, say, is there now?"

"Oh yes, yes there is," said Wilhelm smiling to himself.

"No!" said the Baron, surprised in spite of himself. "Not really?"

"I assure Your Excellency," said Wilhelm earnestly, scuttling back into the rear of his shop, "that it is so." Wilhelm opened a cabinet in the paneling of the wall and brought forth a beautifully designed, intricately carved clock.

"This," said Wilhelm, holding up the delicately worked timepiece, "this clock can kill!"

"What?" exclaimed the Baron, laughing heartily. "A cuckoo clock kill a man? Niemand! You are joking!"

"But no, Herr Baron," said Wilhelm seriously. "I tell the truth. This clock can kill!"

"So?" said the Baron warily. "Perhaps there is gunpowder inside that will explode at a certain time?"

"No, Excellency," said Wilhelm. "Inspect the clock if you like." Wilhelm offered the cuckoo clock to the Baron, who handled it testily. He opened the back and cautiously peered inside.

"You see, Herr Baron," said Wilhelm, "it is in all respects a normal clock."

"No hidden pistol—no poisoned needle in the key?" asked the Baron incredulously.

"None," said Wilhelm.

"Then how does it kill?" asked the Baron, fascinated.

"Pardon, Herr Baron," said Wilhelm, bowing, "but that is my secret, if you do not mind."

"A fool's secret," laughed the Baron. "And a fool's clock," he added, thrusting the timepiece back at the watchmaker.

THEN the Baron hesitated for a second. He privately thought that Wilhelm was mad, quite mad. Still, it piqued his curiosity to have the clockmaker insist so strongly that the clock was lethal.

"I'll tell you what," said the Baron. "Let me take this clock for tonight. If it proves in any way dangerous, you shall have a hundred florins."

"No, Excellency," said Wilhelm firmly, "it would be too hazardous, I fear."

"Ah!" said the Baron. "So you were bluffing, eh? The clock is not so deadly after all!"

"It is," insisted Wilhelm. "It is deadly beyond belief!"

"Well, then," said the Baron archly, "we will just see. Let me have the clock," he ordered.

"Please, Herr Baron, do not tamper with it, I beg of you."

"The clock!" demanded the Baron.

"No, no, Excellency!" shrieked Wilhelm, hugging the mechanism to his chest. "Forget what I have said. Forget the clock and leave in peace!"

"Give me the clock!" shouted the Baron. "Come, give it to me immediately!" The Baron struck Wilhelm across the face and grabbed at the timepiece. The old clockmaker staggered back against his counter and watched the nobleman tuck the clock under his arm. At the doorway the Baron hesitated and turned to look at the trembling little man. "Remember," he said, "a hundred florins if it works."

"Please, Excellency!" said the desperate Wilhelm.

"If it fails," said the Baron crisply, "I feel sorry for you!"

II

THE Baron pushed his chair back from the table and watched his servants clearing the supper dishes. It had been a pleasant meal—venison he had killed himself and good Rhenish wine to wash it down. The Baron lighted a pipe and settled deeper into his armchair.

"Will there be anything else, Herr Baron?" the servant asked.

"Anything else? Oh, yes. There is a clock in the hall—on the large table—bring it here and hang it over the fireplace. Over there where the light is good."

"Very good, Herr Baron."

"Oh, a brace of pistols, Franz—the Spanish ones. I'll load them myself." And we shall see, thought the Baron, how potent is the brainchild of this stupid clockmaker. The Baron felt slightly sheepish. He felt he had been tricked, somehow, into a foolish experiment.

Fortunately no one knows, he thought, no one can laugh—except myself, when I return the clock tomorrow morning—broken to bits!

The servant brought in the clock and hung it over the fireplace between two large candles. He placed the pistols, powder and shot on the table and then bowed out.

It was eight when the Baron had finished loading his weapons. As he tamped the balls firmly into place the large hand of the clock touched the hour.

There was a slight whir of gears and a tiny door flapped open in the top of the clock. A miniature bird, brightly painted, popped out from among the delicately carved oak leaves and began to chirp.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

"Ha," laughed the Baron. "What a stupid sound!"

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

"And who ever saw a bird with red wings and a blue body?" The Baron poured his glass full and smiled broadly. "This clock kill a man? Niemand!"

The Baron turned his chair around so that it was facing the fireplace and he could see the clock more clearly. He checked the priming on his pistols and then refilled his pipe. The warmth of the fire spread over him and his head began to nod. An hour passed before he knew it.

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" the bird chirped.

The Baron looked up sharply, roused unpleasantly from his doze.

"Lieber Gott!" he said. "What a stupid, irritating little bird."

"Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

"I'll be glad when I can take this unpleasant clock back to its maker," thought the Baron, taking a deep draught of wine. He lighted his pipe and drew on it slowly, letting the smoke trail out of his nostrils. As he watched the images forming in the flickering firelight his eyes grew heavy. The monotonous ticking of the clock put him in a trance and drowsiness from the wine spread slowly over his body.

"Cuckoo Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

"Gott in Himmel!" The Baron jumped up. "Not ten o'clock already?"

"Cuckoo!" The clock answered seven times more.

THE Baron got up from his chair and paced nervously across the floor to the liquor cabinet. He selected a bottle of Schnapps and jerked the cork from its neck.

For the next hour the Baron amused himself by alternately drinking and dreaming up schemes to punish the watchmaker for his foolishness.

"He will regret his audacity," said the Baron sternly, "in imposing such a stupid story on me. Oh, he will regret it extremely, that stupid clockmaker."

"Cuckoo!" went the bird, and repeated itself ten more times.

"How he will regret it!" said the Baron aloud, narrowing his eyes and clenching his fingers around the stein. The nobleman reloaded and checked his pistols again. At first the wadding refused to fit. It took him some time, in his drunken state, to get them tightly packed.

"Verdammit!" cursed the Baron. "I have

had enough! I am going to bed, and forget this nonsense." But the Baron didn't move from the room. He checked himself. What foolishness, he thought, to let such a miserable clock, made by a miserable, hunchbacked fool, annoy a person of his rank.

THE Baron settled down grimly in his chair, pistols in hand, and faced the clock. For an hour he sat, staring at the ornate hands as they slowly circled the carved numbers of the face. When they came together over the number twelve there was a whir of gears and again the tiny door flap opened.

The bright little bird popped out.

"Cuckoo!"

"Now," thought the Baron, "we will have an end to this."

"See how loud you sing after this," said the Baron, slowly raising his pistol until it was leveled at the clock.

"Cuckoo!"

"You'll sing a different tune with a ball in your throat," said the Baron, trying to get a bead on the bird in the dim light.

"Cuckoo!"

"Damn it," cried the Baron, "why can't I hold my hand steady?"

"Cuckoo!"

"Shut up! Shut up!" screamed the Baron, squeezing the trigger of his pistol.

"Cuckoo!"

The ball hit a foot above the clock and sent a shower of plaster over the mantel.

"Cuckoo!"

"Gott in Himmel," cried the Baron, "will nothing silence you?" He fired his other pistol blindly.

"Cuckoo!"

The second shot shattered a tall mirror in the corner. Splinters of glass tinkled to the floor.

"Cuckoo!"

"Shut up!" the Baron screamed at the top of his lungs. "Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!"

"Cuckoo!"

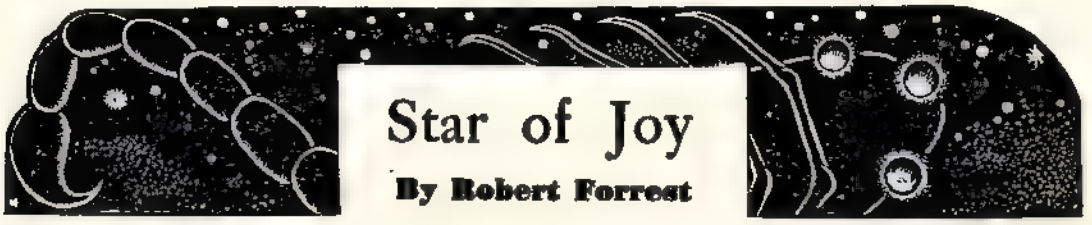
The Baron lunged madly from his chair and clawed at the clock on the wall. The wooden frame of the timepiece was shattered under the Baron's body as he plunged to the floor.

"Cuckoo!" croaked the clock, whirring to a halt. "CUCKOO! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!"

When the servants broke into the room the Baron was dead, his face twisted in a paroxysm of rage. The wheels from the clock had rolled into every corner of the room. The tiny bird, its wings broken and hanging, lay inert on the hearth.

The Baron's death was the talk of Rothenburg for many months afterwards. Everyone had a theory—apoplexy, fits, drunkenness—but no one knew the truth. No one, that is, except Wilhelm.

But then, Wilhelm knew many strange things. He even knew a tone which, if sounded at the right pitch, and repeated at the proper intervals, could drive a man stark, raving mad.



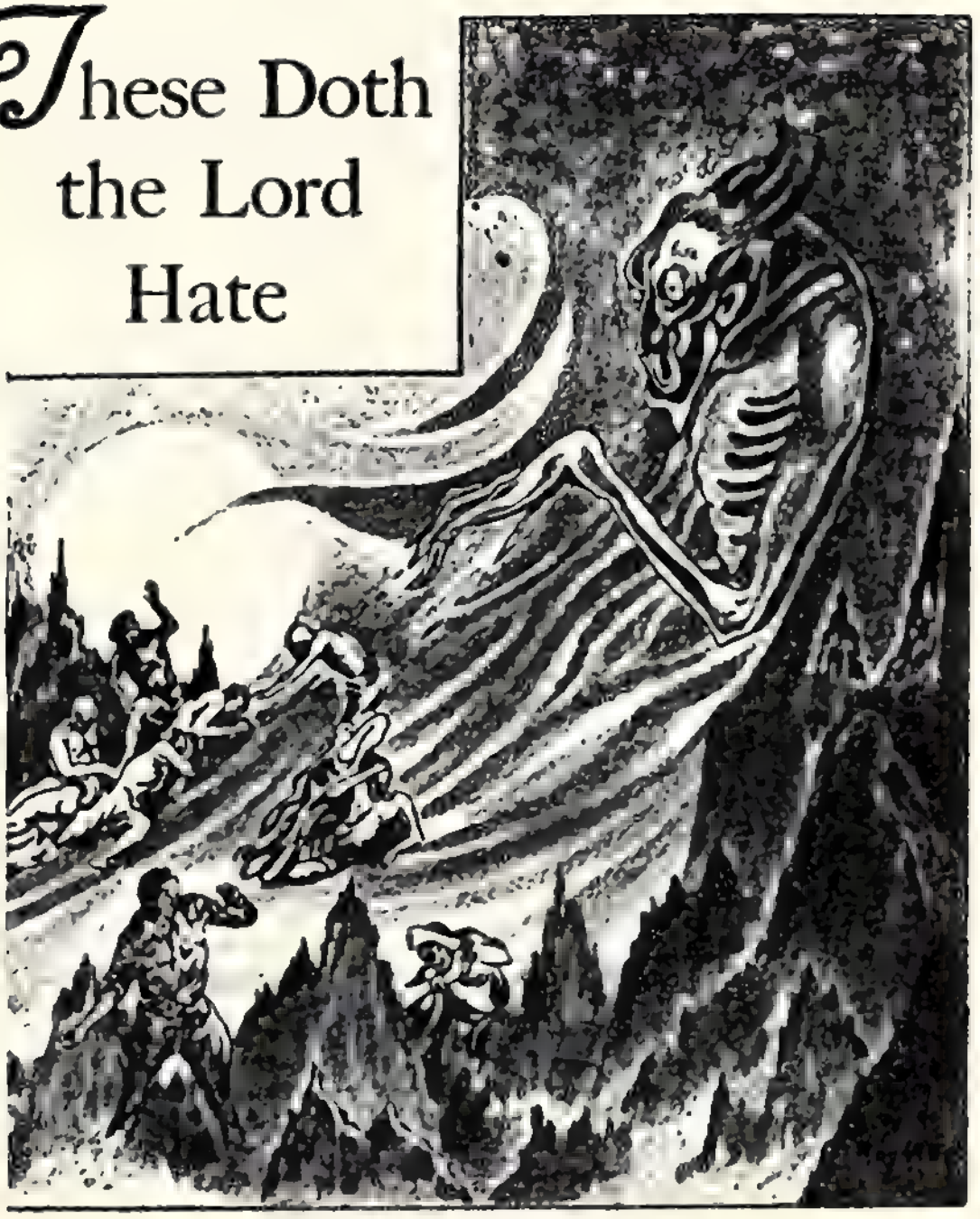
Star of Joy

By Robert Forrest

THERE is no death in Kalenahr—
Wild music holds us here!
We live forever on our star,
To love, and dance, and cheer
Those tragic figures still of earth
Who not yet share our own rebirth
To Joyous Kalenahr.

There is no room in Kalenahr
For sadness, grief, or tears!
Nor does there rise up to our star
The umbrage of your fears.
Instead there wings in joyous flight
Your beauties through the cleansing Night
To bring us each a fresh delight
In Joyous Kalenahr.

These Doth the Lord Hate



BY GANS T. FIELD

BEFORE me lies open E. A Ashwin's translation of *Compendium Maleficarum*, just as three hundred years ago the original lay open before judges and preachers, a notable source of warning against, and indictment of, witchcraft. And from its pages have risen three folk long dead.

A weird fragment from the Dark Ages

The magic that gives them life is that of imagination, concerning which power Brother Francesco-Maria Guazzo writes with sober learning in the very first chapter of the *Compendium*. Their simple embalming was a lone paragraph, barely a hundred and fifty words in length—one of Guazzo's "various and ample examples, with the sole purpose that men, considering the cunning of witches, might study to live piously and devoutly in the Lord."

GUAZZO has written shortly and with reserve, though never dryly; and in 1608, when the *Compendium* was first printed under patronage of Cardinal Orazio Maffei, his style was adequate. James I of England still shuddered over the memory of Dr. Fian's conspiracy with Satan to destroy him. In Bredbur, near Cologne, lived a dozen or more aging men who horrifiedly had seen a captured wolf turn back into their neighbor, the damnable Peter Stumpf. Gilles Grenier, prisoned in a Franciscan friary at Bordeaux, would cheerfully tell any visitor his adventures as a devil-gifted warlock, shape-shifter and cannibal. But times and beliefs have changed. Since Guazzo himself foresaw that his book might provoke "the idle jests of the censorious," let his shade not vex me if I embroider his brief, plain citation.

The phenomenon occurred near Treves, upon the goodly river Moselle, immediately east of the present Franco-German border. Some know Treves, ancient and pleasant, with the cathedral where is preserved a coat of Jesus Christ to call forth the world's wonder and worship. Around the town, now as in Guazzo's time, are pleasant fields and gardens. The scene we are to consider, though unfolding upon land properly German, is more than a trifle French.

In the district of Treves, writes Guazzo and translates Ashwin, *a peasant was planting cabbages with his eight-year-old daughter. . . .*

Frenchmen hold cabbages in notable esteem and affection—a favorite love-name, throughout the provinces and environs of France, is "cabbage." Without good store of this vegetable, no Moselle farm would be perfect, and certainly no Moselle stew. The peasant was planting, and so it was spring, a fair day with the sky clear and bright, as we shall observe. Our man of the soil comes readily to life before us, stooping and delving at the fresh, good-smelling furrow. He seems a sturdy fellow, sharp-featured like a Gaul, blond-bearded like a Teuton. His widely spread feet are encased in wooden shoes, he wears a loose, drab frock and a shapeless cap. For all the distance of years, he is amazingly like a peasant cabbage-grower of today.

And beside him, as we have read, works his daughter. Eight years old—is that not young to be a gardener? Yet she is vigorous and intelligent and willing beyond her years. The trowel and seedbag seem to do their own duty in her small, quick hands. Her father is deeply impressed. He, continues the commentator: . . . *praised the girl highly for the work. The young maid, whose sex and age combined to make her talkative, boasted that she could do more wonderful things than that; and when her father asked what they were. . . .*

It is well worth another full stop to consider that complete picture—one of rustic endeavor, not too heavy or too distasteful, especially when the gardeners are so bound together in mutual understanding and affection. Seed-sowers of today can understand Father's pride in his industrious daughter. "How well you dig, my little cabbage!" And his eyes crinkle up in his good-natured brown face as he enjoys his own play upon words. He doubts honestly if there was ever such a good child. She is a true daughter of her mother, and here he turns to glance over his shoulder at the house above the garden —small but snug and well repaired, with an ample gush of smoke from the chimney hole.

His wife is evidently concocting the noonday meal. Something more than bread and soup, he warrants—he is mystified at the plenty of good things she provides, as if she got it by enchantment.

I WILL grant that the picture is too bright too cheerful; were it fiction, we might borrow from Edgar Allan Poe the device of

a black cloud dimming the sky. But perhaps the contrast will be the greater with things as they are.

The excellent child finds the more savor in Father's commendation because she knows that well she deserves it. Nor is she backward in telling him that planting cabbages is not her lone virtue and study. Other of her talents may please as well as benefit him.

Again Guazzo: . . . *she said, "Go away a little, and I will quickly make it rain on whatever part of the garden you wish."*

And Father? It takes no further effort of the mind's eye to see that peasant visage broaden and the beard stir in a great grin. This daughter of his never fails to warm his heart. Surely she must have heard him say that rain would be welcome in this planting season. As she grows older, she will hear from the priest that only God almighty can send rain. But her pretense is innocent—today let her have her fun, play a game to make them both laugh. Guazzo calls the good man astonished, but more probably he achieves an elaborate burlesque of surprises as he says: *"Come, then, I will go a little away."*

Jovially he tramps off, fifty paces or so, taking care not to tread on the freshly seeded cabbage-rows. He and his daughter have gone far head of their intentions this morning; there can be a minute or two of rest and sport. He pauses and turns.

Now, for the first time, perhaps he scowls.

The child has caught up a gnarled stick and is beating up a froth of mud in a shallow trench. She is speaking, too, or saying a litany. He can catch only the rhythmic sound of her voice, no words.

. . . *and behold there fell from the clouds a sudden rain upon the said place.*

"From the clouds"—whence came those clouds so suddenly? And now this deluge; from his point apart, the cabbage-farmer stares. His shoulders hunch in his loose smock, as though they supported a sudden heavy weight. His sabots dig into the earth. One square-fingered hand steals upward to sign the cross upon his thick chest.

And over yonder falls a rain such as no Christian cares to see, heavy and narrow. It is a shimmery, drenching column of down-darting water, no thicker than a round tower of the baron's castle at Treves, but tall as infinity. He can hear it, too, a drumming rattle on the thirsty clods, like the patterned dance-gambols of so many light impious hoofs.

HE CROSSED himself again, and the rain is over, as abruptly and completely as it began. Now is the time for him to inquire in his heart if indeed he saw and heard rightly.

He knows that he did. The rain is gone, but there remains a circular patch of earth all churned to mud; and here comes trotting his daughter, smiling and triumphant, and her garments are drenched. Her eyes sparkle; so sparkled the eyes of her mother, no later than last Sunday, when a roast of pig came to the rough table, as if from nowhere. The hungry husband did not ask about it then; now the question burns him—whence came that meat?

All this detail is romance, a careless padding of Guazzo's narrative, which is much shorter and balder:

The astounded father asked: "Who taught you to do this?" She answered: "My mother did; and she is very clever at this and other things like it."

We may assure ourselves that there will be no more cabbage-planting this day. The peasant nods dumbly, and plucks at the hem of his smock. Then he clears his throat and says that the sun is high, and that the mid-day meal is undoubtedly ready.

Together they go to the hut above the garden—the man's sabots thudding heavily and lifelessly, the child's bare feet skipping and dancing. A hearty, rose-cheeked woman greets them loudly at the door. To be sure, dinner is ready; but he who suggested a stoppage of work to eat, he finds himself unable to swallow a crumb.

Finally he rises, lurches rather than walks from the door. Nearby is a secluded spot; we can readily visualize it as a clump of bushy young trees beside a narrow creek. Into that hiding plunges the peasant. Screened by the trunks and branches, he sinks wretchedly to

his knees. He feels that this is not enough of humility. His face droops, his shoulders go slack, and a moment later he lies prostrate upon the shadowed mold of last year's leaves.

There he prays, for an hour and an hour. Sometimes he finds words to say, oftener he achieves only moans and unaccustomed tears.

Can he not be forgiven for having merciful doubts as to his duty in this case? Even the Savior once pleaded that a bitter cup be withheld from His lips. But the peasant makes shift to rise at last. His face is set as firmly as the carven granite of a saint on the cathedral's doorway, yonder in Treves. True, his hands tremble a little, as Abraham's hands must have trembled as they lifted to sacrifice Isaac at God's command; but the final answer has come into his heart, and he knows what to do.

Here is that answer, as Guazzo gives it:

The peasant nobly faced his right and plain duty; so a few days later, on the pretense that he had been invited to a wedding, he took his wife and daughter dressed in festal wedding robes to the neighboring town, where he handed them over to the Judge to be punished for the crime of witchcraft.

It is hard to imagine how the man lived during those intervening "few days." It is impossible to divine what were his arts and powers that he kept a smiling face and calm manner while his heart smoldered like a coal from the smithy.

And the plan of betrayal, that was a shrewd one and worthy of the greatest witchfinder, let alone a peasant. Yet I doubt if he congratulated himself upon it.

They go to the fair town of Treves, all three in holiday gear. Sometimes, on that journey, the little rain-maker must have been weary, and rode perforce on Father's shoulder. Was his arm tighter than usual around her little body?

Did his voice quiver as he answered some question she prattled? I make no doubt of that; but from Guazzo we know what the end of the jaunt turned out to be.

Of a sudden the mother and daughter are in the hands of the judge, under guard of his men-at-arms.

With what fierce scorn does the witch-woman deny the charges—until, after hours of questioning and perhaps a touch of the lash or thumbscrew, she makes confession. True, she is a sorceress. She has signed the Devil's book, attended the Sabbat, sworn the oath of evil. She has schooled her daughter to the like infamy.

LOOK elsewhere in Guazzo's absorbing *Compendium* for what must have been the rest of the story. Death by fire, he says confidently, is the only right punishment for the dreadful sin of witchcraft. A stake, therefore, is set upright in the market-place of Treves, and heaped about with faggots. To this the witch and her fledgling are borne, high upon the armored shoulders of the law's servants. With the last of her tears, the older culprit pleads and prays that she be allowed to walk. Sternly the judge refuses this request; is it not a commonplace that a witch, going to execution, need but touch toe to earth for her bonds to dissolve and her executioners to fall as if struck by lightning?

That double witch-burning is a rare treat and curiosity in Treves, and it receives the attention it merits. Not a soul in all the district, from the baron of the castle to the beggars whose home and heritage is the gutter, but must draw near to see.

No, that is not strictly true. Not every soul in the district is present at the burning; for a solitary man trudges away, to his empty home by the cabbage garden. His big hands are locked behind him, his chin weighs like lead upon his breast, the lines of his face teem with tears. He dares to utter the supplication refused by the priest at the cathedral —a timid prayer that two spirits even now taking flight, shall not be utterly consumed in hell; O Lord, let them win at last through long punishment and sincere repentance to some measure of comfort in a most humble corner of heaven.

Not all agonies are of the fire.

The Bradley Vampire

BY ROGER M. THOMAS

Heading by Jon Arfstrom

MY GREAT grandfather, James A. Bradley, had always been regarded among the closer members of the family as a highly emotional man. Not crazy or even eccentric, but perhaps just a little queer. Because of this we were not surprised to learn that he had directed that his little strongbox of personal belongings be held in trust to be opened at the end of 50 years by the eldest male member of the family.

Now, 50 years later to the day, the box was turned over to me, Arthur James Bradley. Upon opening it I found it contained nothing but an assortment of personal keepsakes such as a large signet ring, a blue ribbon won in a hog judging contest and such things as that. Only that—and a letter. The letter, however, was such as I'll warrant has never before been written. I can now understand why great grandfather stipulated that it not be read until 50 years after his death. Had he made it public during his lifetime he would un-

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. . . its sole purpose is to further Satan's battle against righteousness.

doubtedly have been committed to the lunatic asylum with all possible haste. Read shortly after his death it would have possibly caused tongues to wag concerning the relative sanity of other members of the family.

I have allowed great grandfather's testament to be made public after careful deliberation. It is possible his writings are the ravings of a morbidly demented man. If on the other hand they are true, it is vitally necessary that the world be informed of the terrors he allegedly experienced on those few grim nights so that it might learn to protect itself against similar occurrences.

I, James Andrews Bradley, being of sound body and, I hope, mind, do attest the following series of events to be true.

THE evening of June 6, 1872 was stormy and wet. The day had been unbearably hot and humid—an almost sure sign of rain to come. The evening, however, had turned off so chilly that I was compelled to build a fire in the fireplace. My wife had gone to the next town to spend a few days with her sister who had just returned from the hospital following a rather serious operation, and I was sitting before the fire smoking my pipe, missing Martha terribly and wondering if, perhaps, she missed me just a little.

I must have dozed, for I was awakened by a repeated rapping on the door. I rose to answer it, wondering who would be calling on a night like this. We live in the country and callers are infrequent even under normal conditions.

Throwing open the door I saw a young appearing woman standing on the porch. There in the half light she seemed many more times beautiful than the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

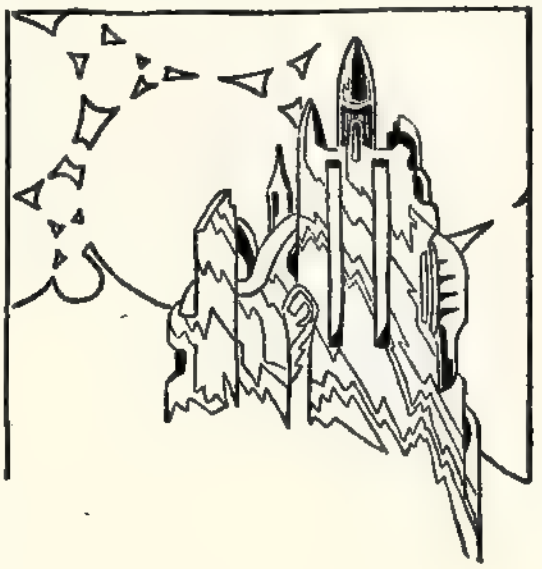
"Pardon me," she said, speaking in a low throaty kind of voice, "my horse bolted a few rods down the road and threw me from the carriage. I wonder if you could give me directions for reaching town?"

"Surely," I replied, "but come in. Come in. You must be drenched."

As she entered the lighted hallway I was surprised to note that although she must have walked some distance in the rain she did not appear to be at all wet. I also saw that while unquestionably beautiful, hers was not the type of beauty the average man admires in a woman. Her hair was of a magnificent glossy midnight black, but her ears, which the hair failed to cover, were almost pointed. Her face was narrow with a sharp almost knifelike chin. She was tall, lissome, graceful, but her most arresting feature was her mouth. It was wide, the lips a little thin and very, very red. I found myself wondering what it would be like to be kissed by those lips but quickly dismissed the thought from my mind. I had not been long married and somehow did not believe Martha would approve.

WHEN we reached the big living room Shep, my collie dog who had been peacefully sleeping before the fire awoke and set up the most awful, fear crazed howling. This I could not understand as Shep, though a good pet and fine help at driving cattle, certainly was not fierce and, in fact, was not much of a watch dog. Why he should take offense to our visitor I did not know.

I knelt down and patted the dog. "Quiet, Shep," I said. "Settle down. Is that the way you treat our guests?" But I could not quiet the dog. He pushed his



belly against the floor and cowered back from the girl. Still his blood freezing howls rent the air. I led him towards the back door and he shot through it.

"I'm very sorry," I said turning back to my visitor. I have never before seen Shep treat a guest so—" I stopped, horrified at the expression of such living hate on her face. Her lips were drawn back and downward in a cruel grimace and her nostrils pinched. Her eyes, focused on the spot where Shep had lain, appeared to be flashing blue sparks. Looking into them made me think for a moment I was looking into the bottom-most depths of hell. I could not repress a strong shudder.

Seeing me stare at her, the girl immediately brought her emotions under control.

"I am afraid," she said, "that your dog doesn't like me. Now if you will tell me how to reach town I will leave you."

I gave her directions, protesting that she should let me hitch up the team and drive her in. She, however, would not hear of it and as I had no desire to go out on such a night I did not press the issue. I walked with her to the front door, asking her to wait there until I could call Shep into the kitchen in order to avoid any unpleasantness between them.

When I had Shep safely in the kitchen and started toward the front door I heard it close. I hastened my steps, picking up the kerosene lamp on the living room table. With the idea of throwing some light on the path for my visitor I opened the front door. To my complete dismay the pathway was deserted. I stood in the doorway a moment then returned to my pipe and easy chair, still wondering over the rapid disappearance of my guest.

Due to the night's rain, I was unable next day to do much outside of the regular chores. Consequently I decided to clean up the house, which had been sadly neglected during Martha's absence. About midway through these housewifely chores I began to appreciate the work a woman is daily put to. I toiled through an afternoon of dusting, sweeping, scrubbing and cursing the luck that had temporarily made a bachelor of me. Occasionally my mind dwelt upon my caller of the night before, and I was surprised to find that I could scarcely remember any feature about her. All I could recall plainly was Shep's panic when the girl came near him. As for the girl herself I dimly recalled features of a somewhat unnatural beauty. Strange how today thought of her filled me with repugnance.

My musings were interrupted by Shep's barking. It was a joyous sort of yelp, one reserved for only three people; Martha, myself and my good friend and neighbor, Charlie Redik. Charlie, not bothering to knock, walked in the front door and saw me standing in the hallway, broom and dustpan in hand.

"Ah, James," he said, "I credited many achievements to you but your efficiency as the lady of the house comes as a surprise to me."

He was a sturdy, jovial man, always patient and kind. Being born in that superstition ridden section of Central Europe, some of its superstitions had become a part of his nature. Aside from this he was a completely solid and practical man. Charlie was several years older than I and had never married. He was predominantly a farmer and cared little for that not having to do with agriculture. However, an aesthetic spark had made him, of all things, a butterfly collector. He had a large and beautiful collection, each specimen pinned in a shallow box and the whole covered with a plate of glass making it airtight. He was justly proud of the net result of his hobby.

I led him into the living room and we smoked and talked awhile. I told him briefly of my visitor of the night before and he listened intently, a strange look on his face. I had tried to tell it lightly, but Charlie's look of astonishment gradually turning to horror struck a somber note to my story. I ended it as quickly as possible.

Charlie sat trance-like for a few moments, occasionally muttering "Vampire—vampire—"

His manner was making me so nervous that I finally said rather rudely, "Charlie,

what in the world are you talking about?"

The dazed look was still on his face as he replied, "Friend James. You have been visited by the vampire. That creature not of the living, yet undead. In Hungary I knew of many who had been visited by the vampire. I know its method of coming."

I scoffed at his words. "Surely, Charlie, you don't actually believe such a thing, do you?"

"James, James," he said, "why will you not believe what your very eyes tell you is true? You saw the features. Yet today you can recall only that they seemed pointed—sharp. You can remember nothing definite—a good sign that you were gazing at a supernatural being. It seemed beautiful last night while in your presence yet today your mind's eye rejects it as repulsive. That is the hypnotic influence the vampire would have over us. And if that is not enough, what about poor old Shep. Dogs are not subject to what you call superstitious nonsense. And Shep certainly is not easily frightened normally."

The part about Shep is, of course, what struck me as particularly strange, but even taking his actions into consideration I did not intend to credit Charlie's weird theories as fact and told him so.

He continued:

"You still refuse to believe me, eh? James, the vampire dates back beyond ancient Egypt. It can be found in Asia, Europe, the Americas, anywhere in the world. Text after text has been written on its habits, its existence. Even today in our so-called enlightened age the vampire demands some attention. The only difference today is that instead of being treated, and rightfully so, as a supernatural being, too many incline to the belief that vampirism is a form of melancholy giving a human being a fear of the daylight hours and an insatiable thirst for blood. I say the vampire is the pawn of the devil. It feeds on—yes—lusts for the blood of living beings. Its sole purpose is to further Satan's battle against righteousness on earth. If the vampire tastes of your blood you after death yourself become a vampire. It is thus that their ranks are swelled."

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This lengthy speech by the usually rather taciturn Charlie had made me decidedly uneasy. Whether it was his talk or the eerie wind which was now whipping around the corners of the house I do not know, but I was suddenly conscious of a creepy feeling. I diverted the conversation to pleasanter channels by suggesting a game of cribbage. As dusk had fallen I also lit the living room lamp.

We had scarcely got into the first game when the air was split asunder by the most chilling howls of pure terror from Shep, who had been left outside.

Dropping our cards, Charlie and I raced out, not bothering to shut the door as we went.

Shep was cowering in front of the barn. His tail between his legs, he seemed trying to back away from something. His movements were vile, craven, and the horrible howling must have awakened neighbors for miles around.

WHEN Charlie and I reached him we could see nothing near him except a large moth which was circling over his head. As we came on the scene it flew past us in the direction of the house. Shep immediately quieted down, though he still shook visibly.

"I cannot understand it," I told Charlie. "Shep has never behaved this way before."

"The vampire," Charlie said, a shudder in his voice. "The moth, the bat, the rat. The vampire can assume the form of all those beasts and many more. Friend James, believe me. You are in grave peril. Not of your life but of your very soul."

"The peril," I said, trying to make it sound light, "seems to be with Shep. Personally, I still don't believe in your vampire, but apparently he does. Charlie, I wish you would do me a favor and keep him a few days for me. Shep likes you and I'm afraid that if he stays here any longer something will frighten him to death."

"Or kill him through taking the blood from his body," Charlie added. "James, neither you nor the dog is safe. Shep is in danger because he knows the peril hovering over you. You are because you do not, or

will not believe what you do know. Certainly he comes with me, James; and you, my friend. Be very, very careful."

With this final word Charlie left me, Shep at his heels. I spent the next couple of hours doing the evening chores and then returned to the house to make a cold supper. I then pondered over Charlie's words. I certainly was not going to be so credulous as to take what he said as fact. Indeed, had it not been for Shep's actions I would have set them aside as the morbid pratings of a very superstitious mind. I was trying to think of a natural explanation for everything when I heard:

"Good evening, James Bradley."

I whirled around. There in the semi-darkness of a corner stood the girl of the night before.

"You!" I gasped. "What are you doing here?"

"Do you not remember? You asked me in last night. One invitation is all that is needed."

I let that pass. "What I mean is, how did you get into the house?"

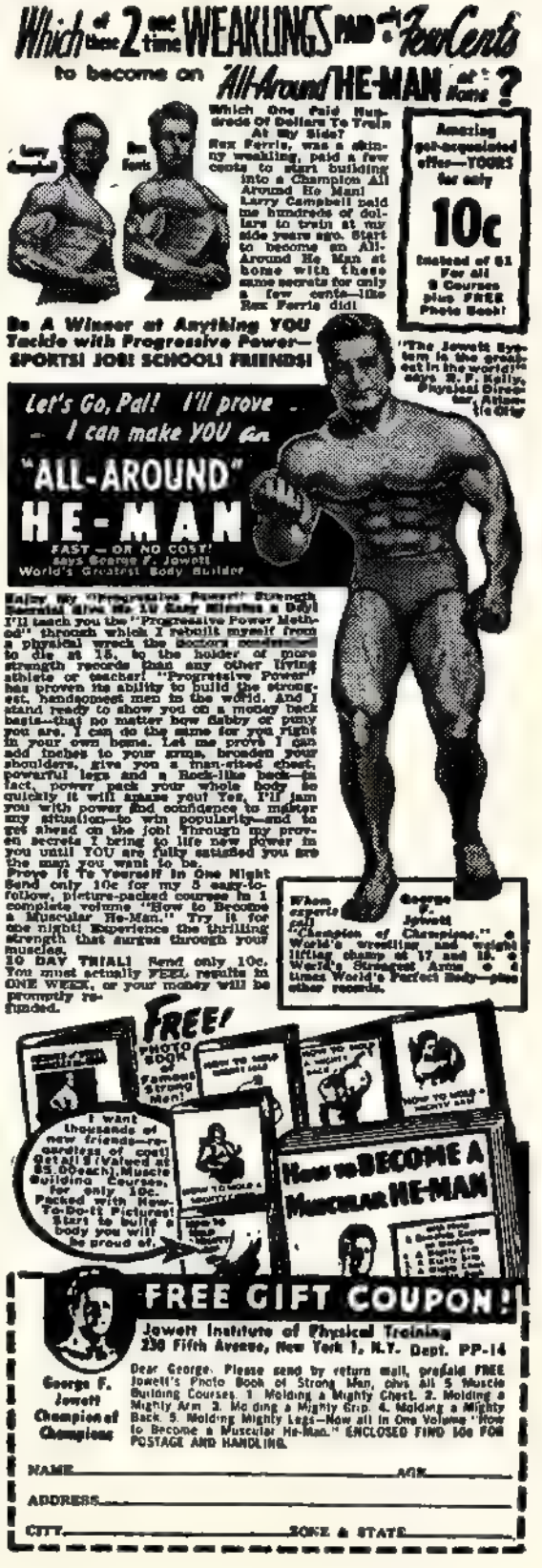
I had risen and she advanced toward me.

"I have many ways of entering or leaving. Ways that you do not yet understand; but ways which you, with my help, may soon achieve." She smiled at me; such a ghastly smile. I had risen to my feet, but I must confess her smile made my knees weak.

It was more of a snarl or malicious grin. And those teeth! Small, very small, and coming to needle sharp points. The gory red gums tried to outdo the lips in brightness. The whole picture was unspeakably evil, yet fascinating.

As she smiled she advanced toward me and, I swear, I could do nothing but back away from her. To step to one side or shove her away from me would have been impossible at the moment.

My reverse motion was halted by the big living room table which I had backed into. My hands I put on the surface of the table and there I stood, the girl (for lack of a better thing to call her) advancing closer. As she moved she said:



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"Why do you fear me, James Bradley? Why do you shrink from me? Come, will you not enter my world of beautiful darkness?" She put icy cold hands on my shoulders and leaned toward me. Her breath, warm, stickily sweet was in my nostrils. A peculiar lethargic feeling stole over me and I seemed to have no desire to break away from this strange creature.

My hands, which had been unconsciously roving about the table top behind me, suddenly closed over something which I knew by the feel was the small Bible Martha always left lying there. The moment I touched the Bible I felt a surge of strength go through me and the feeling of lethargy seemed suddenly broken. I stepped to one side, at the same time bringing the hand holding the Bible out in front of me.

The girl recoiled as though she had been struck. She stood a moment, breathing hard and gnashing her teeth. At last she grated:

"So, James Bradley, you shun me this time. But there will be other times, never fear. One day you will be as me, to walk the night through eternity. Before that time, however, you will wish you had not refused me this night. That, (she pointed to a picture of Martha) must be the wife you set such great store by. I believe I will enlist her in my ranks first, unless, of course, you should experience a change of heart by this time tomorrow night when I return. I would much rather she were brought into my world by you. That would lend such a nice touch. But you are powerless to stand against me, James Bradley. Remember that. Absolutely powerless against me."

She laughed then—the most hideous sound I have ever heard and directed at me a look so intense with malevolence that I was forced to throw an arm over my eyes. When I dared look again she was gone.

I RETIRED shortly, but I did not rest. My sleep was disturbed by nightmares of a type which could only have been induced by the weird girl's presence and the

equally weird explanation of her by Charlie Redik. I did not yet believe Charlie's story. I still groped for a natural explanation, but of her power to harm Martha I had no doubt. Do you wonder that my sleep was fitful and broken?

The next day was a bad one for me. I first discovered that several of my chickens were dead in the barnyard, including old Gus, the rooster who had assumed the task of getting up on the fence and waking me every morning at dawn. To lose all these fowl was bad enough, but to discover that they had died from all the blood being in some way drained from them made it many times worse. It lent an unearthly aura to the whole thing and made me more than ever conscious of my own weird troubles and the creature behind them. I wondered if perhaps she had anything to do with this latest misfortune.

I was still pondering the situation that evening when Charlie Redik showed up, followed by Shep.

I was glad to see Charlie again for I had a lot of questions to ask him. I wasn't ready to accept his vampire theories in full, but recent developments had made of me at least an agnostic on the subject. When we went into the house I was surprised to see that Shep absolutely refused to follow. Nor would he go near the barn where we had found him howling the night before.

When we were comfortably seated in the living room I told Charlie the story. When I had finished he was profoundly shocked. He said:

"This is even worse than I feared. James, since the vampire will return tonight you must not be here. Instead I will be here in your place."

"But, Charlie," I protested, "even though I still can't agree that we're fighting the supernatural I do believe there is a grave risk to be run. I can't let you be the one to take the risk."

"I will be protected," Charlie said. "I am much better protected than you because I know what we have to deal with. You know but will not believe. Now, when the vampire appears it will be as a bat or other winged creature in order to flit from

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window to window seeking you out. However, it will not be you it finds but me, in your bed and apparently sleeping. Tell me, James, have you any garlic in the house?"

"Yes, plenty," I recalled smiling. "It was the cause of Martha's and my first argument. I bought it thinking I was purchasing a bushel of onions. But, Charlie, why can't you let me do what has to be done? Wouldn't I be just as well protected as you?"

"I shall answer that question with a question, James. Tell me, what is garlic or wildrose used for according to legend?"

"Why, if I remember correctly, to ward off vampires and other evil spirits."

"Exactly. And do you believe, seriously, that it has the power to do that?"

"Certainly not. In the first place I don't even believe in ghosts, evil spirits, boglies, warlocks or any of the rest."

"Exactly," Charlie replied. "Therefore you couldn't trust the precautions one must take to ward them off. To you the garlic is a fetish; the symbol of a superstitious mind. Legend has it that in order to be effective the wildrose or the garlic must enjoy the utmost faith of the person under its protection. Whether this is true or not I do not know, but we must take no chances. To you the garlic is nothing more than a seasoning for the table. You see now why I must be the one to deal with your nocturnal lady friend?"

I SAW what he meant but I still didn't like it. Nor was I much pleased with what Charlie directed to be done next. He ordered me to help him smear garlic around every possible means of entrance or egress. Windows, doors, all got a liberal dose of the garlic odor, especially around the casements. Charlie even rubbed a good bit around the fireplace opening and around a mousehole which we discovered in a corner of the kitchen. Finally he tied a few sprigs of the garlic around his neck and declared himself satisfied with the arrangements.

"And now, friend James," he said, "it is for you to go to my house to spend the night. And under no circumstances are you to return here before sunrise. Is that understood? Under *no* circumstances whatever."

I had no choice but to do as he bid me, having let him direct the operations thus far, and I bid him good night and started for his farm, closely followed by Shep. It was starting to sprinkle a little as I set out.

My sleep, such as it was that night, was shattered by a volley of the loudest claps of thunder I have ever heard. I looked out the window and saw that the sprinkle of the preceding night had turned to such a downpour that it threatened to make a small river of the entire countryside. It was so dark that I supposed I had awakened sometime in those forlorn hours just before dawn. On looking at the alarm clock on Charlie's dresser, (which I had neglected to set) however, I saw that it was well after six o'clock. Why, that was over an hour after sunrise and yet it was still dark. I hurriedly dressed and started for my own farm, hoping that Charlie was all right and fearing that he was not.

My fears were groundless, however, for when I reached my house Charlie was in the kitchen boiling coffee and frying eggs. He looked very tired, a little apprehensive and somewhat pale, but he greeted me cheerfully enough.

"Ah, good morning, James." He said. "You are just in time to join me for breakfast. That is if I can get these so very contrary eggs to come loose from the frying pan."

"Did you put grease in the pan?" I asked, forced to smile.

"Ach! No. I was sure I forgot something. You see, James, I am so excited over the new addition to my collection that my mind wanders this morning. Come, I will show it to you."

"First, Charlie," I said, "what about last night? Did anything happen?"

"Happen?"

"You know what I mean. Did you have any—uh—company?"

"James," he said evasively, "let us consider the matter closed when I say that I very much doubt that you will be bothered any longer by unwanted guests. See how Shep gambols about. Is that not proof enough?"

It was true. Shep had come bounding in, tracking mud all over the house he had so recently abjured.

"Now, come," Charlie continued, "let me show you the piece for my collection."

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He took me into the living room and there showed me the largest moth I have ever seen. It seemed to have an evil expression if a moth can be said to have an expression at all. I also noticed that instead of being impaled through the center with a pin this specimen had a pointed match stick pushed through it about one-fourth of the way down from its head and slightly to the left of center. As I said before, it looked evil.

"Beautiful, is it not?" Charlie asked in a pleased tone of voice. "Now come, James. Let us try to eat this revolting mess I am cooking. After that we have a task before us. We must remove all traces of garlic from the house before your good wife returns else she will suspect that we have been at the hard cider in her absence or that we both lost our minds at the same time. And take my word for it, James. You will be troubled no more with clandestine visitors, so I would suggest that you and I keep this matter from your wife. Just a little secret wholly between ourselves, eh?"

CHARLIE was right. The events I have chronicled took place well over a year ago, and so far I have had no more such nightly calls. Everything is once more serene and Martha has no knowledge of what occurred.

But now we must seek an explanation for these events and their sudden ceasing. I have two.

The first is that the girl who had caused all this trouble was an escaped lunatic. It was our good fortune that she was captured before she could do any real harm. This could explain Shep's fear of her too, as dogs are said to recognize and fear those of unsound mind, but it would hardly explain why he wouldn't enter the house even after she was gone. There are a lot of things such a theory doesn't explain, so it doesn't satisfy me at all.

The other possibility is that Charlie Redik was right all along. The girl *was* a vampire. When Charlie went to bed in my house he left the window beside the bed open so the vampire could enter. Once

it was inside he managed to shut the window and the garlic around the casement served to make a seal. Charlie himself was well saturated with garlic. He believed in its powers. Hence, the vampire was powerless against him. When it attempted to leave, of course, the garlic sealed means of exit prevented it from doing so. Probably before Charlie's eyes it changed its appearance to that of a moth in a vain attempt to find some small opening. If this is the case its struggle must have been horribly terrific.

It was still dark even after the usual hour of sunrise, so the vampire in its frenzy to escape failed to notice that night was gone. As legend tells us that the vampire can operate only between the hours of sunset and sunrise it of course became powerless after the night had ended and collapsed in its present shape, that of a moth, to the floor. There Charlie had driven the match stick through it and put it in the airtight container with the rest of his collection. As I said before the stick was driven in such a manner as to suggest the position of the heart of a human being. (Or one of the so-called undead).

I don't like this theory either, for if I accepted it it means that I must revise all my former opinions concerning the subject. I must admit a belief in the supernatural. I must believe that my very soul was in jeopardy from the vampire and that Martha could have been in just as great danger from me. I must change my beliefs so thoroughly that I fear the transition would be more than my mentality could stand. And yet the facts speak for themselves.

Shep hated and feared the creature the first time he saw her, or it. Hence, the near attack on Shep in the barnyard.

My chickens were killed. Not eaten, but every drop of blood drained from their bodies. And finally, the being's uncanny ability to apparently manifest itself in what I had supposed to be an empty room or to disappear in the twinkling of an eye.

As to my second theory, I do not know if it is correct or not, and I am sure that Charlie Redik, who does know, will never tell.

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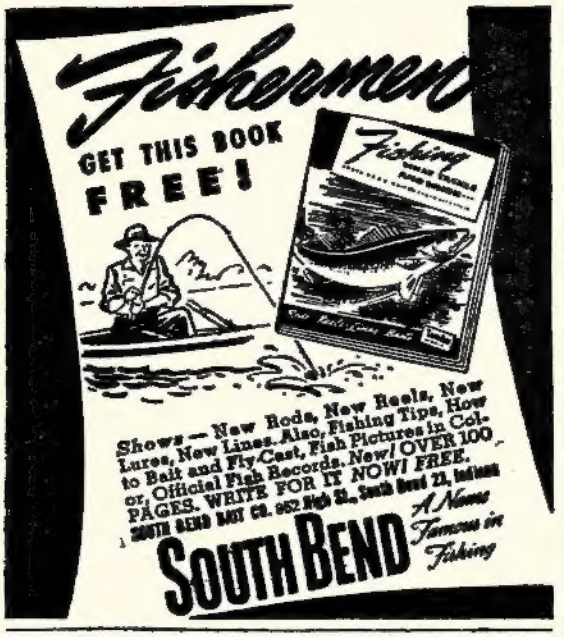

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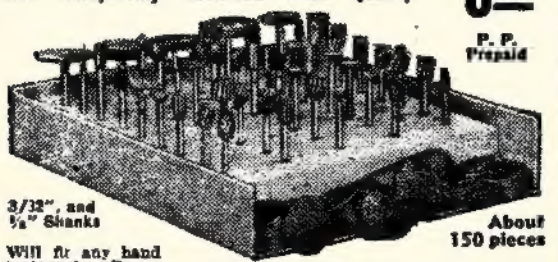

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THAT, then is my great grandfather's story, told fifty years after his death. He died a happy and, to all outward appearances, completely sane man. It is now up to the reader to decide how much if any of his tale can be taken as fact.

In closing I should like to add that Charlie Redik, who remained a bachelor to the end, passed on shortly before his friend and left most of his belongings to my great grandfather. Among these properties was his magnificent collection of butterflies. He stipulated that if the collection were to be destroyed it must be done by fire, and it must be done thoroughly.

The collection has remained in the attic of great grandfather's house, where my wife and I are living, for over fifty years. Out of curiosity we brought it down and looked at it. The collection was beautiful with the exception of the large moth mentioned in my relative's story. As he said, it looked ugly and, in some way, unspeakably evil. The match stick was still in its place, yet there seemed to be an air of living hatred and malevolence surrounding the creature.

Though we are not superstitious people we thought it best to be on the safe side. We burned the entire collection immediately.

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